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DUNGEON®

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DUNGEON®

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This Means War!

By Christopher Perkins

First, I would like to welcome Steve Winter back to our production team. It wasn't so long ago that Steve was helping us steer the ezines, and now he's back to muck around with a few more issues. The first thing we told Steve when he returned was that he needed to write this month's *Dragon* editorial and make it about war, which is our theme for the month.

Speaking of war, Greg and I were losing the battle against the submissions inbox until we coaxed Daniel Helmick, our digital studio consultant, into helping us out. If you submitted a pitch to the ezines during the last open submission window, you might have received a reply from Dan. For us producers, it's been an enormous relief knowing there's an extra set of eyes poring over the hundreds of proposals, so THANK YOU, Dan. Victory is within our grasp!

As I said, this month's theme is war, and we have three adventures that relate to the topic very differently.

"Blood of Gruumsh" speaks to the legendary war between elves and orcs. The adventure, not coincidentally, ties to the release of our newest *Dungeon Command*™ faction pack, also called *Blood of Gruumsh*™. We thought it would be fun to do an adventure inspired by the miniatures in this new pack. Steve Winter said he was up to the task and turned over a non-subterranean dungeon crawl that's full of mystery and surprises. The adventure deals more with the consequences of war than war itself, and it paints elves and orcs in a whole new light. (I won't say anymore lest I spoil the surprise.)

"Siege of Gardmore Abbey" is weird for several reasons. First, it takes place in the past, chronicling the defense and ultimate fall of a holy monastery in the Nentir Vale. (If you've read the *Madness at Gardmore Abbey*™ super-adventure, you know that Gardmore Abbey was besieged by an army of orcs. This adventure lets you play out that epic engagement.) Second, it comes with six pregenerated characters who are closely tied to the unfolding plot. We hope you agree that it makes a fun change of pace from your regularly scheduled campaign—a chance for players to participate in an ancient struggle and contribute to the history of the setting, whether that's the Nentir Vale or your home campaign. Continuing the trend started last month with "The Hidden Shrine of Tamoachan," this is our latest attempt to get some of our best 4th Edition Organized Play content into the hands of D&D Insider™ subscribers. We hope you like.

Our final offering this month is "The Vulture's Feast." Although it's written as a Forgotten Realms® adventure set before the Sundering, it's easy to adapt to any home campaign, since the premise is so simple: The characters must rescue a captured spy from an evil warlord. In this case, the spy works for the Harpers, and the warlord is allied with the Zhentarim, but you can replace the Harpers and the Zhentarim with two other forces at war. The conflict between these polar-opposite organizations is more of a backdrop, giving an added layer of depth to the conflict between the heroes and the warlord, who are, in some respects, willing pawns in this much larger struggle. But fear not: The characters also get to beat up some Zhents along the way!

To see what's coming next month, scroll to the very last page. I love ending every issue with a little tease of what's to come!

The Vulture's Feast

A D&D® adventure for characters of levels 6-8

By Brian Cortijo & Christopher Perkins

Illustrations by Kieran Yanner

Cartography by Mike Schley

Emboldened by the lack of strong leadership in the Dalelands, a warlord called the Vulture is gathering followers to her side and slowly carving a fiefdom out of the lands surrounding her lair, and she plans to ally herself with the Zhentarim. The adventurers must stop the Vulture from presenting her prize hostage—a Harper agent—to visiting Zhentarim agents, which would seal the alliance and put the folk of the Dales at greater risk than they already face.

"The Vulture's Feast" is a Dungeons & Dragons® adventure set in the Dalelands of the Forgotten Realms® campaign setting. It can easily be adapted to other campaigns by replacing the Harpers and the Zhentarim with other secretive organizations at work in a troubled rural realm.

The adventure takes place before the Spellplague, around 1369 DR, during which time the Harpers and the Zhentarim have agents and spies throughout the Dalelands. After the Spellplague, these organizations are pale shadows of their former selves, with little to no influence in the Dales. If you're running a post-Spellplague campaign in which the Harpers are still around and the Zhentarim remain an active threat to the Dales, this adventure can be run pretty much as written.

Adventure Background

For three summers and winters, a warlord named Aleta Vanmarwin has been enforcing her will on the lands between Tasseldale and Battledale, terrorizing folk who inhabit these lands. A former mercenary, Vanmarwin grew tired of collecting wages and following orders, and instead made a good living through banditry. She now pays younger, more pliable soldiers to follow her orders. After acquiring a large sum of gold from a caravan her followers attacked, she built a fortified estate and adopted a grander persona. She now calls herself the Vulture and dresses her soldiers in black tabards emblazoned with a golden talon. The Vulture's troops patrol the lands south of the Glaemril River and the eastern spur of the River Ashaba, claiming the wares of caravans. They keep provisions and weapons, selling the rest.

A month ago, the Vulture's soldiers discovered a pair of Harper spies in the vicinity of her stronghold. Elariel Taias, the senior of the two, escaped, but her son, Kimach, was caught. The Vulture has invited Zhentarim representatives to her estate and plans to present Kimach to them as a prize, solidifying her worth to the group and securing their aid in expanding her influence over the area.

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The Vulture's Plan

Aleta Vanmarwin is not simply a power-hungry woman hoping that the Zhentarim can help her bring the Dalelands to heel. She is a smart, charismatic leader who wishes to create a stable, independent dale—just one under her control. The Vulture does not pretend to be the rightful ruler of any current or lost dale, nor the heir to Aencar, a powerful warrior who briefly united the Dalelands centuries ago. She merely seeks to persuade the farmers and villagers in her immediate vicinity that she is their best hope for peace and order.

The Zhentarim have deep roots in the Dalelands, and the Vulture does not want them thinking of her as a rival. Turning over the Harper spy to the Zhentarim, she hopes, should keep the Harpers (wherever they might be) too distracted with recapturing their lost member to keep an eye on her activities. If she can keep both groups focused on each other, their ongoing conflict will drive more hamlets and villages to seek the protection of a strong, capable leader—protection the Vulture is more than willing to provide.

The Vulture has invited a Zhent war mage named Toren Witherfield to her stronghold for a feast, during which she plans to relinquish the captured Harper spy into his custody.

The Harpers

Elariel Taias and her son were shadowing a group of the Vulture's brigands when they were spotted and chased through the woods. After Kimach was captured, the wounded Elariel retreated to a grove inhabited by a battle-weary duskwood treant who has long considered himself an ally of the Harpers. The treant, Eoghan, provided Elariel with shelter and persuaded some dryad allies to create false trails leading away from the grove. Elariel's pursuers eventually gave up their search and returned to the Vulture's citadel with their sole captive.

Elariel has spent the past week trying to convince Eoghan to help her mount a rescue, but the treant is reluctant to make an enemy of the Vulture. Eoghan knows that the wooden palisade surrounding the Vulture's stronghold is made from the remains of several slain treants, and he believes the Vulture somehow bound their spirits to the wood. He does not wish to suffer a similar fate.

Fortunately for her, Elariel's prayers are about to be answered, in the form of a wayward group of adventurers.

Adventure Synopsis

The heroes encounter Elariel when they arrive at Eoghan's grove (for reasons discussed under "Adventure Hooks" below). She asks them to free her son, Kimach, from the Vulture and offers to guide them safely to the warlord's stronghold. If the characters are persuasive, they can convince the reluctant treant to accompany them, although Eoghan makes his concerns known.

The journey to the Vulture's Roost takes three days on foot but, true to her word, Elariel guides the party along a safe path while avoiding various woodland perils.

In the week since Kimach's capture, the Vulture has had time to contact the Zhentarim and plan her feast. As the characters are scouting the stronghold, Toren Witherfield and his escort arrive. The party must decide whether to fight the Zhentarim outside the stronghold or use the distraction of their arrival to slip inside. From this point on, the characters' actions and decisions largely determine the outcome of the adventure. The Vulture doesn't want to look weak or vulnerable in the eyes of the Zhentarim; any attack on her stronghold is met with extreme force.

Adventure Hooks

The adventure begins when the adventurers arrive at Eoghan's grove. There are several reasons why they might seek out the reclusive treant. Feel free to use whichever adventure hook best serves your campaign.

Lost Ritual: The characters have need of a lost ritual known only to duskwood treants. There's a chance that Eoghan knows the ritual. (Whether he does or not is up to you.)

Old Friend: A venerable dwarf on his deathbed pays the adventurers to deliver news of his imminent death to Eoghan. The two became fast friends over a hundred years ago when the treant saved the dwarf from drowning in the Ashaba River. (Eoghan remembers the dwarf fondly and is saddened by the news.)

Warped Trees: Duskwood trees around Hunter's Down are being twisted into horrible monstrosities by some evil presence, and local druids ask the adventurers to check on Eoghan, make sure the treant is all right, and seek his counsel. (Whether Eoghan can be of assistance is up to you.)

Eoghan's Grove

Eoghan lives in a stretch of forest east of the town of Highmoon and south of where the River Ashaba meets the Glaemril River. The characters are told where to find Eoghan and travel some number of days to reach the forest of the treant's grove. The journey can be as eventful or uneventful as you wish.

When the party reaches the treant's grove, read:

Thick briars surround a misty grove of ancient duskwood trees, their black trunks standing tall against the bright foliage, their tangled crowns interwoven to form a silvery dome overhead. A grim visage appears on one of the trees, which begins to uproot itself. The treant bellows, "Who are you, fleshlings?"

Eoghan doesn't like trespassers, but his bark, so to speak, is worse than his bite. In truth, the treant abhors violence, preferring to tend his grove and be left alone. He does not attack unless the characters pose an obvious threat to him or his trees.

Eoghan's reaction to the party's arrival alerts Elariel, who is resting near a small reflecting pool in the heart of the grove. She is initially hidden from view but quietly moves through the forest and takes up position behind a deadfall. There, she listens in on Eoghan's conversation with the characters. Once she realizes that the adventurers might be able to help her, she steps forward.

When Elariel appears, read:
A middle-aged elf appears from behind a moss-covered deadfall. Her hair, the gold color of autumn leaves, is tied back, and she wears brown leather armor that has seen better days. Her left arm is cradled in a sling. The treant senses her arrival and says, "This is my friend, Elariel. One of her limbs is broken."

As the elf steps forward, you see that she also wears a cloak fastened about her shoulders with a silver pin depicting a harp and a crescent moon. "My name is Elariel Taias. Eoghan was kind enough to provide shelter, but I'm in dire need of your assistance."

Elariel's cloak pin bears the symbol of the Harpers. Although she has mostly recovered from her injuries, her left arm is broken. The break can be mended with healing magic. Any effect that allows Elariel to spend a healing surge repairs the damaged limb.

If the characters express interest in helping Elariel, read:
"My son, Kimach, was captured by soldiers loyal to a warlord called the Vulture. I believe they have taken him to her stronghold, located three days' march from Eoghan's grove. The two of us were spying on the Vulture's activities when we were spotted and pursued. I alone was able to escape."

Elariel speaks the truth, but she's more desperate than she sounds. A DC 16 Insight check reveals some underlying tension between her and Eoghan, stemming from the fact that Elariel has been unable to persuade the treant to help her rescue Kimach from the Vulture's stronghold.

Elariel is tight-lipped about matters concerning the Harpers. She claims that Kimach only recently joined the organization, and it's clear that she holds herself partly responsible for his capture.

Kimach's father, a human named Kellen, was also a Harper. Five years ago, he disappeared while on a secret mission in Daggerdale. Elariel assumes he is dead, and there are no other Harpers close by that she's aware of.

Characters who have spent time in the Dalelands know of the Vulture; nonetheless, Elariel is quick to share what she knows.

Read:
"The Vulture's real name is Aleta Vanmarwin, a former mercenary who turned to a life of banditry. She used her stolen wealth to attract evil-minded soldiers to her banner and has, over the past three years, used violence and intimidation to carve out a sizable fiefdom. The Vulture seeks to expand her influence and set herself up as one of the great leaders of the Dales, but she has all the cruelty and ambition of a tyrant.

"Aleta has a fortified stronghold called the Vulture's Roost, which is situated atop a hill overlooking the southernmost branch of the River Ashaba. It's surrounded on three sides by a wooden palisade, which Eoghan believes was made from slain treants."

Elariel reports that there are only two ways to infiltrate the Vulture's Roost. The first is to approach the stronghold at night and quietly scale the palisade, but the guards in the watchtowers are vigilant. The second approach is more dangerous but less likely to arouse the guards; it requires climbing the 200-foot-high cliffs north of the stronghold, where there is no palisade.

If the characters question Eoghan about his reluctance to help Elariel, read:
The treant creaks loudly. "I told Elariel that I am too old and tired to help, but the truth is I am afraid. The hill upon which the Vulture's Roost now sits was once a grove of treants. The Vulture and her soldiers slaughtered them, cleared the hilltop, and used wood from the grove to build their palisade. I have heard rumblings that the Vulture used black magic to bind the treants' spirits to the palisade. I do not wish to suffer such a terrible fate."

Elariel respects Eoghan's unwillingness to help her, which is why she has given up trying to persuade the treant. She does not, however, discourage the characters from attempting to convince Eoghan to join them. You can encourage the players to roleplay the situation or have the most charismatic character make a DC 23 Diplomacy check (other characters may use the Aid Another action to assist).

The territory surrounding the Vulture's Roost is well patrolled, and the characters will be easier to spot in the company of Eoghan, so there's a risk to letting him tag along. (It's hard for the Vulture's patrols to miss a 30-foot-tall treant lumbering across the Dalelands.) Once Elariel has a party of adventurers at her disposal, she's less inclined to press Eoghan into leaving his grove.

If the characters inquire about a possible reward, read:
Elariel turns to Eoghan, who lets out a long, deep sigh. "I have some treasure hidden from the days when Randal Morn walked these woods . . . trinkets seized from goblin despots, dark elf wizards, and other evils long gone from this world. If you agree to help Elariel with her quest, these treasures will be yours to keep."

Eoghan keeps his half-forgotten treasure buried in the earth. When the time comes to part with it, he animates two of the surrounding trees and commands them to use their roots to bring these buried trinkets to the surface.

If the characters express no interest in a reward, Eoghan keeps the treasure hidden until after Kimach has been rescued, after which he freely offers it to the characters.

Treasure: Eoghan's treasure includes a rotten wooden chest (unlocked) containing 2,000 gp sprinkled with thirty 100-gp gems, a male drow skeleton wearing an adamantine *survivor's belt* (or another level 11 magic item), a female drow skeleton wearing *+2 gloaming leather armor* (or another level 10 magic item), a *+2 lifestealer longsword* (or another level 9 magic item), a *+2 staff of withering* (or another level 8 magic item), and an old leather saddlebag containing an *elixir of giant strength* (or another level 9 consumable magic item). All these magic items are described in *Mordenkainen's Magnificent Emporium*™. The female drow skeleton also has four scrolls containing the rituals Clear the Path, Feat of Strength, Status, and Tiny Lanterns, all of which are described in the *Forgotten Realms Player's Guide*.

MAJOR QUEST: RESCUE KIMACH
7th-Level Major Quest (300 XP/character)

The characters complete this quest by ensuring that Kimach is set free and safely escorted from the Vulture's stronghold.

Friendly NPCs

The adventure assumes that Elariel Taias joins the adventurers as a companion character (*Dungeon Master's Guide*® 2, page 27), serving as both a guide and a reminder of what the characters must accomplish. As the DM, you can also place her in jeopardy to increase tension and suspense.

Eoghan the treant might also accompany the party, though his *animate tree* power will be of little use once the party reaches the Vulture's stronghold.

Duskwood Treant — **Level 9 Elite Controller**
Large fey magical beast (plant) — XP 400

HP 200; **Bloodied** 100 — **Initiative** +6
AC 23, **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 22 — **Perception** +8
Speed 7 (forest walk) — Low-light vision
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1

Traits

Hide in Plain Sight
As long as the treant doesn't move, it can pass itself off as an ordinary tree. Creatures unaware of the treant's true nature must succeed at a DC 25 Insight check to discern it.

Wooden Body
Whenever the treant takes fire damage, it also takes ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).

Standard Actions

Slam ✦ At-Will
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +14 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6 + 10 damage, and the treant slides the target 1 square.

Throw Rock ✦ At-Will
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +14 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6 + 10 damage, and the target falls prone.

Animate Tree ✦ At-Will
Effect: The treant animates one living tree within 10 squares of it. The tree uproots itself and can take actions starting on the treant's next turn. The tree has the treant's statistics, except that its Intelligence is 1 and it cannot animate trees. It acts on the treant's initiative count. When the treant drops to 0 hit points or fewer, any trees animated by it become inanimate. The treant can animate only two trees at a time.

Str 21 (+9) — **Dex** 14 (+6) — **Wis** 19 (+8)
Con 20 (+9) — **Int** 12 (+5) — **Cha** 12 (+5)
Alignment unaligned — **Languages** Common, Elven

Elariel Taias — **Level 6 Striker**
Medium fey humanoid, elf

HP 52; **Bloodied** 26; **Healing Surges** 8 — **Initiative** +7
AC 21, **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 19 — **Perception** +11
Speed 7 — Low-light vision

Traits

Wild Step
Elariel ignores difficult terrain whenever she shifts.

Standard Actions

Longsword (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8 + 7 damage.
Effect: Elariel can shift 1 square.

Short Sword (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. AC
Hit: 1d6 + 7 damage.
Effect: Elariel can shift 1 square.

Two-Weapon Rend ✦ Recharge ⚄ ⁞⁞
Effect: Elariel uses *longsword* and *short sword* against the same target, but takes a -2 penalty to both attack rolls. If both attacks hit, the target takes 5 extra damage.

Triggered Actions

Elven Accuracy ✦ Encounter
Trigger: Elariel makes an attack roll.
Effect (Free Action): Elariel rerolls the triggering attack roll and uses the second result.

Sudden Reprieve ✦ Encounter
Trigger: Elariel is dazed, immobilized, marked, or slowed by an attack.
Effect (Free Action): Elariel can make a saving throw against the triggering effect. If the save succeeds, the effect ends.

Skills Athletics +9, History +8, Nature +11, Stealth +12
Str 12 (+4) — **Dex** 18 (+7) — **Wis** 17 (+6)
Con 15 (+5) — **Int** 11 (+3) — **Cha** 14 (+5)
Alignment good — **Languages** Common, Elven
Equipment leather armor, longsword, short sword

The Journey

Once the characters commit to rescuing Kimach, Elariel leads them overland toward the Vulture's stronghold, which takes three days to reach on foot. She is quiet for most of the journey, her thoughts focused on the rescue of her son. Eoghan, if present, tries to strike up long conversations at every turn and is delighted if he finds one or more characters willing to speak at length about anything.

When the adventurers are ready to begin the quest, read:

Elariel leads you from Eoghan's grove to the south bank of the Glaemril River, where you stop for the night. In the morning, you follow the meandering river east until it meets the River Ashaba and find a secluded cave in which to camp. The following morning, Elariel warns you to keep an eye out for soldiers as she leads you along a series of well-worn footpaths that hug the south shore of the River Ashaba, carefully avoiding paths favored by the Vulture's patrols.

Have Elariel and the player characters make DC 16 Perception checks to spot one of the Vulture's patrols ahead. If Eoghan is present and mobile, the patrol automatically spots him due to his enormous size. Continue with "Black Tabard, Gold Talons" below.

Black Tabards, Gold Talons

Combat Encounter Level 7 (1,400 XP)

Four of the Vulture's soldiers have just slain a roaming owlbear and are not expecting more trouble so soon, so the party might take them by surprise (assuming the patrol has not spotted Eoghan). If no one in the party detects the patrol, the two groups notice each other at the same time, and neither group gains surprise.

When the characters happen upon the patrol, read:

A thin blanket of morning fog covers the land. Ahead, you see a group of four scruffy, unwashed human soldiers standing around the freshly slaughtered carcass of an owlbear. Two of the soldiers are having their wounds tended to by the others, and all of them wear black tabards over their chainmail. Emblazoned on each tabard is a golden emblem: a stylized vulture's claw.

Two of the soldiers are wounded, with remaining hit points equal to their bloodied values. The other two are uninjured. The characters can choose to avoid a confrontation (if they have surprise) or approach the patrol. Given the choice, Elariel would rather not face the patrol, but she can be persuaded otherwise.

One of the soldiers, who was part of the group that captured her son, recognizes Elariel unless measures have been taken to disguise her. If the characters keep Elariel hidden or disguised, they can try to bluff their way past the patrol, but not if Eoghan is with them. The soldiers attack Elariel or the treant on sight, fighting any adventurers that stand in their way.

If the characters defeat the patrol, they can use the soldiers' armor and distinctive tabards to create disguises for themselves. Armored characters wearing the Vulture's tabards gain a +4 item bonus to Bluff checks made to pass as new recruits in the Vulture's ever-growing army.

Tactics: The soldiers are heartless combat veterans who fight to the death if they cannot retreat; they do not surrender. One of them carries a copper horn to sound an alarm that can be heard from miles away. If two of the soldiers fall in battle, one of the survivors tries to blow the horn (a standard action). Once the horn is blown, the characters have only a few minutes to evacuate the area, lest they be spotted by other patrols advancing on the location.

Treasure: In addition to armor and weapons, each soldier carries 1d20 gp in a pouch.

Development: The soldiers have taken over a small farmstead and cottage about a mile south of their present location. They murdered the cottage's original inhabitants and discarded their corpses in a nearby field for the neighborhood crows to feast on. If the characters decide to spy rather than fight, they can follow as the soldiers head back to the cottage to recuperate.

The farmstead is surrounded by an apple orchard and guarded by another four soldiers. (Feel free to use one of the poster maps in the *Dungeon Master's Kit*™ boxed set to represent the homestead if the characters decide to attack there.)

4 Human Outlaws	**Level 8 Soldier**
Medium natural humanoid	XP 350 each
HP 87; **Bloodied** 43	**Initiative** +8
AC 24, **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 19	**Perception** +4
Speed 5	
Traits	
Threatening Reach	
While armed with a halberd, the outlaw can make opportunity attacks against enemies within 2 squares of it.	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Halberd** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +13 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d10 + 5 damage.	
Effect: The target is marked until the end of the outlaw's next turn.	
⸸ **Pushback Strike** (weapon) ✦ **Recharge** ⚄ ⁞⁞	
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +13 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d10 + 5 damage, the outlaw pushes the target 1 square, and the target falls prone.	
➢ **Crossbow** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Ranged 15/30; +13 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d8 + 7 damage.	
Str 16 (+7) **Dex** 14 (+6) **Wis** 11 (+4)	
Con 15 (+6) **Int** 10 (+4) **Cha** 12 (+5)	
Alignment unaligned **Languages** Common	
Equipment chainmail, halberd, crossbow, 20 bolts	

Vulture's Roost

The Vulture's Roost is perched atop a hill overlooking the River Ashaba, with commanding views of the surrounding countryside. The characters must decide how best to approach the stronghold, whether by stealth, trickery, or brute force. Each of these options is discussed in more detail below.

When the characters approach within sight of the Vulture's Roost, read:

A large hill rises ahead of you. The north side of the hill facing the River Ashaba has eroded away, forming steep cliffs, but the southern side of the hill offers a more gradual ascent. The hillsides have been cleared of trees except for the stumps, and perched atop the hill is the Vulture's Roost—a large stone manor surrounded by a wooden palisade. Inside the palisade, six elevated wooden platforms serve as watchtowers, each one rising to a height of twenty feet and containing a soldier armed with a crossbow. A wide footpath leads up the southern hillside to the gates of the palisade.

The wooden palisade surrounds the stronghold on three sides, while the north side overlooking the River Ashaba is protected instead by 200-foot-high cliffs. Vigilant sharpshooters are assigned to the watchtowers, making it impossible to approach the palisade or front gates during daylight hours without being spotted.

By the time the characters reach the base of the hill, the Zhentarim force arrives and ascends the trail that leads up the southern hillside to the front gates.

If the characters are in a position to see the Zhentarim arrive, read:

A small retinue makes its way up the south side of the hill, following the path to the gates. You see five figures riding black horses. Four of them wear black scale armor and spiked helms with ominous visors concealing their faces. They also have heavy shields strapped to their arms, and boldly emblazoned upon these shields is the symbol of the Zhentarim. These soldiers surround and protect the leader of their retinue—a gaunt human wizard with black hair, pale skin, and dark robes.

Given that the Zhents are riding horses, the characters are unlikely intercept the group before it reaches the front gates. It takes a while to open the gates wide enough to admit the Zhentarim force, though, so characters who move quickly up the hill can attack from behind—which, of course, raises the alarm throughout the stronghold.

Statistics and combat tactics for the inhabitants of the Vulture's Roost and their Zhentarim guests are collected at the end of the adventure for ease of reference. How the garrison and the Zhents react to the characters depends on the manner of their approach, as outlined below.

Approach: Brute Force

If the characters make no effort to conceal their approach and attack the stronghold or the Zhentarim force head-on, they have a tough fight (possibly several tough fights) on their hands, and few if any opportunities to rest.

Characters have 5 rounds to engage the Zhents outside the stronghold before the main gates open and soldiers from the barracks (area J) join the fray. The Zhentarim soldiers dismount to fight enemies on the ground, but the war mage (Toren Witherfield) stays on his horse and rides into the courtyard as soon as he can get inside the fortress. Meanwhile, sharpshooters on the nearby watchtowers (area B) do their best to provide the Zhentarim with artillery support from the start of the characters' attack.

If Elariel is present, she stays as close to the palisade wall as possible to avoid taking fire from sharpshooters while engaging the Zhent forces in melee. Eoghan, if present, does whatever the characters ask him to do. If Elariel falls in battle, the treant flees.

Approach: Stealth

The party can sneak up on the stronghold after nightfall to take advantage of the darkness, but characters without low-light vision or light sources are forced to move at half speed. If Eoghan is with the party, the stealthy approach is not an option. Even in darkness, the massive treant cannot climb the hillside without being detected.

If the party tries to move quietly up the hill at night, have everyone in the group make a DC 16 Stealth check. If half or more succeed, the group reaches the wooden palisade undetected.

Characters also have the option of climbing the cliffs to the north. The cliffs have abundant handholds and footholds, and the top is unguarded. Small white doves roost on several narrow cliff ledges, however, and if they are disturbed, the Vulture's Roost sharpshooters on the northernmost watchtowers will hear them. For more information on the cliffs and the birds, see area C.

Approach: Trickery

The characters might surrender themselves to one of the Vulture's patrols, dress in black tabards and pass themselves off as the Vulture's soldiers, pretend to be visiting dignitaries sent by a nearby village or hamlet to pay tribute, or perpetrate some other deception in order to gain entry into the stronghold. Whatever the ruse, have all characters present (including Elariel, if she is among them) make a group Bluff check opposed by the Insight checks of those at whom the ruse is directed.

Most likely, the characters will first aim to deceive the Vulture's Roost sharpshooters perched atop the watchtowers, then the soldiers from the barracks (area J) who greet them at the gates, and finally the

Vulture and her half-orc lieutenants (area K). The Vulture doesn't know every one of her soldiers personally, but they are cut from the same cloth, and unless the characters exude a cruel demeanor, she will suspect something is amiss.

If trickery fails, the characters have few options but to fight, retreat, or parley.

Approach: Parley

The characters can approach the stronghold openly and attempt to parley with the Vulture to secure the release of her prisoner. The Vulture is at first unwilling to release Kimach to anyone other than her new Zhent allies. If the Zhentarim force is defeated and the characters remain a serious threat to her stronghold, though, she is willing to hear what they have to offer. She is nothing if not practical, and having gone to the trouble and expense of preparing a lavish feast for her new "friends" in the Zhentarim, she's happy to invite Elariel and the characters to dine with her.

If the characters talk their way into the stronghold and take seats at the Vulture's dining table, they are treated to some wonderful entrees (see area K1) and have the chance to negotiate Kimach's safe release. You'll have to decide whether the characters' final offer is tempting or lucrative enough to persuade the Vulture. If she doesn't trust them or like their offer, she serves them poisoned wine; if that fails to kill them, she and her forces attack them outright.

The Vulture keeps a cask of poisoned wine in the kitchen (area K4), and more importantly, she has already imbibed the antidote (more of which is kept in area K17). This is a standard precaution whenever the Vulture entertains guests, be they petitioners, Zhentarim, or adventurers.

While the Vulture dines with her guests, her two half-orc lieutenants stand guard on the balconies (areas K10 and K15) with crossbows at the ready, while the sharpshooters in areas K2 and K6 take aim behind arrow slits. Meanwhile, the soldiers from the barracks (area J) stand ready to storm the Vulture's mansion at a moment's notice.

Approach: Wait

If the characters allow the Zhentarim riders to enter the stronghold and take no steps to interfere with the feast that the Vulture has planned, they can wait to see what happens next.

The riders tie their horses together in the courtyard and are led into the Vulture's mansion (area K), where they are greeted by the warlord and her two half-orc lieutenants, Darok and Szorp. The Zhents are shown to guest quarters (area K11) and spend the rest of the day meeting with the Vulture (sharing intelligence about the Dalelands) before they gather in her feast hall (area K1) for dinner. The feast is splendid, and right before dessert is served, the Vulture orders her lieutenants to present the Harper prisoner to Toren Witherfield, the Zhent war mage. The gift is well received. Kimach is placed in shackles, with a hood thrown over his head, and led into the courtyard. The Zhentarim mount their horses, with Kimach riding on the back of one of the soldiers' steeds, and they leave with great haste under the cloak of night. The Vulture revels in the success of the feast and secures the stronghold before retiring for a good night's sleep.

In such a scenario, the best chance the characters have of retrieving Kimach is to ambush the Zhents as they leave the Vulture's Roost. The Zhents don't stick around, though, since they have been sated with food and are not spoiling for a fight against "brigands." They also fear that the adventurers are working for the Vulture, and that this attack represents some kind of betrayal on her part. In any event, they try to retreat and don't willingly give up their prisoner.

Features of the Stronghold

Ceilings: All ceilings are 15 feet high unless noted otherwise.

Doors: All doors except the main gates (area A) are made of wood and have AC/Fortitude 15, Reflex 5, and 30 hit points. The Vulture, her half-orc lieutenants, and her household servants carry keys for all locked doors, which otherwise require a DC 16 Thievery check to unlock or a DC 16 Strength check to break down.

Light: Oil lanterns fill most interior areas with bright light. The lanterns are held in wall brackets or dangle from ceiling beams or rafters by iron chains.

Stairs: The stairs are difficult terrain to climb, and normal terrain otherwise.

Wooden Palisade: The palisade surrounding the stronghold is 15 feet high and made of tightly arranged vertical logs embedded 4 feet into the packed earth and hard clay of the hilltop. The logs are sharpened to points at the top. Climbing the palisade without gear requires a DC 25 Athletics check. Every 5-foot section of the palisade has AC/Fortitude 25, Reflex 5, and 80 hit points.

There's more to the palisade than meets the eye, though. After slaughtering a grove of young treants living atop the hill, the Vulture hired a witch to bind the treants' spirits to the wood that later went into building the palisade. These angry spirits indiscriminately attack living creatures that approach.

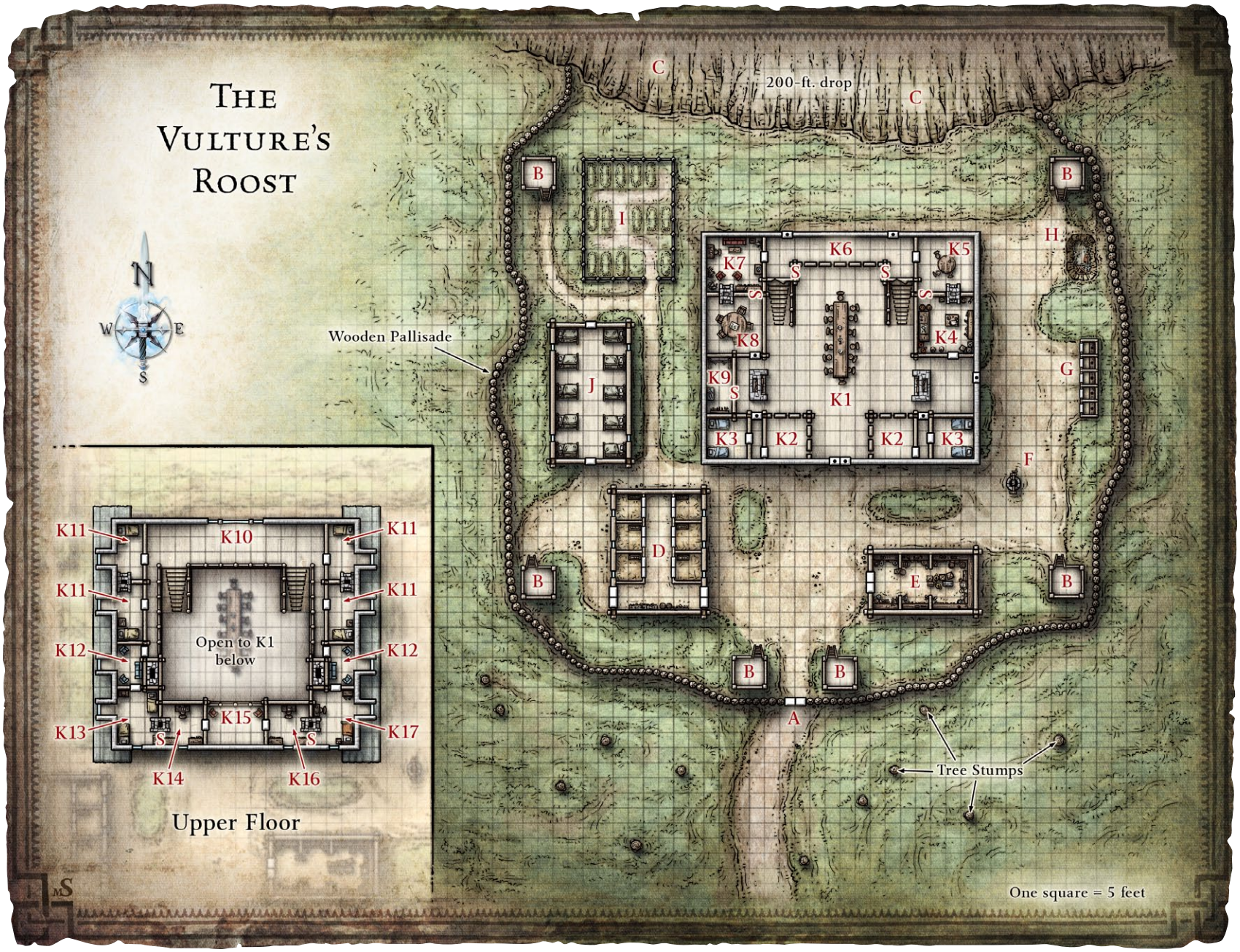
Triggered Actions

Spirit Grasp (necrotic, psychic) ✦ **At-Will**

Trigger: A living creature moves adjacent to the palisade, starts its turn adjacent to the palisade, or makes a melee attack against the palisade.

Attack (No Action): Close blast 1 (triggering creature); +12 vs. Will

Hit: 2d6 necrotic and psychic damage, and the target is immobilized (save ends).


The Vulture's Roost
N
W
E
S
Wooden Pallisade
200-ft. drop
C
B
I
J
D
E
F
G
H
A
K1
K2
K3
K4
K5
K6
K7
K8
K9
S
Tree Stumps
Open to K1 below
K10
K11
K12
K13
K14
K15
K16
K17
Upper Floor
One square = 5 feet

Keyed Locations

The following encounter areas are keyed to the map of the Vulture's Roost.

A. Main Gates

Exploration Encounter

These 10-foot-tall, sturdy wooden gates are set firmly into the palisade wall and held shut from within by a heavy oak bar. Lifting the bar requires a standard action, but there's no way this can be accomplished from outside the stronghold. The gates can be smashed open (AC/Fortitude 25, Reflex 5, 300 hit points).

B. Watchtowers

Combat Encounter (250 XP per tower)

Each 10-foot-square, uncovered wooden platform is enclosed by 4-foot-high wooden walls and raised to a height of 20 feet by four sturdy legs made from tree trunks. A wooden ladder extends from the platform to the ground. Creatures can climb a ladder at half speed without risking a fall, or at normal speed if they succeed at a DC 15 Athletics check.

The low walls that surround the platform provide superior cover against attacks from the ground and partial cover against attacks from neighboring watchtowers and rooftops.

Monsters: 6 Vulture's Roost sharpshooters (1 per watchtower); see "Human Soldiers" for statistics.

Tactics: The sharpshooters watch the hillsides for approaching enemies and shout an alarm if they see anything amiss. In combat, they use *careful aim* to deal more damage with their crossbows and *archer's decoy* to improve their defenses.

Treasure: Each sharpshooter carries a pouch that holds 1d20 gp.

C. Steep Cliff

Exploration Encounter

The Vulture's stronghold is perched close to the edge of a wide cliff that drops 200 feet to the shores of the River Ashaba. The cliff isn't perfectly vertical, so creatures that fall tumble down the rough cliff face before finally hitting the bottom—a very painful and altogether unpleasant experience. A fall from the top of the cliff deals 20d10 damage.

The cliff has abundant handholds and footholds, and requires a DC 15 Athletics check to climb. Due to the height of the cliff, multiple checks are required to complete any ascent or descent.

The cliffs are also home to scores of small white doves, which nest on ledges and outcroppings. Characters scaling the cliff run the risk of disturbing these birds, and in turn, attracting the unwanted attention of the sharpshooters in the northernmost watchtowers (see area B). Characters can avoid the birds by taking a –5 penalty on Athletics checks made to scale the cliff; otherwise, any failed check (including ones that don't result in a fall) causes 1d6 birds to take to the air. If that happens, have the nearest sharpshooter make a DC 25 Perception check, subtracting 1 from the DC for each bird that takes flight. If the check succeeds, the sharpshooter focuses his or her attention on the cliff for the next hour and can make a Perception check to try to spot anyone climbing over the top.

D. Stables

Exploration Encounter

This single-story wooden building has two sets of sliding doors leading in and out, as well as six stalls enclosed by wooden gates. Each stall contains a water trough and a manger. Saddles, bridles, and other riding gear hang along the south wall.

Monsters: 6 horses (*Monster Vault*™, page 297). These horses belong to the Vulture and her soldiers. They are accustomed to being ridden into battle and are not easily spooked.

E. Storage Shed

Exploration Encounter

This single-story wooden building houses the bulk of the stronghold's nonperishable supplies, including tools, casks filled with nails, loose wooden planks, horseshoes, coils of rope, casks of lantern oil and pitch, and barrels of river water (for putting out fires). The interior is so cluttered and disorganized that there are many cubbies in which to hide, and Stealth checks made here gain a +5 bonus.

F. Freshwater Well

Exploration Encounter

A 3-foot-high stone ring encloses the mouth of this 150-foot-deep, 5-foot-diameter well shaft. A wooden winch, rope, and bucket are rigged to the well, allowing easy access to the large fresh water cistern at the bottom. Any creature that falls down the well takes 10d6 damage and plunges into the cistern. The sides of the well are rough and can be climbed with a DC 15 Athletics check.

G. Outhouses

Exploration Encounter

This row of wooden outhouses stands near the eastern palisade. A predictably unpleasant stench surrounds them, and there's a 25% chance that one outhouse (determined randomly) is occupied by either a soldier from area J or one of the servants from area K. The human outlaw standing guard at area H has a clear view of the outhouses.

Each outhouse contains a wooden bench with a chamber pot tucked underneath it. The Vulture's servants routinely empty the pots by discarding the waste over the cliff (area C).

Hidden Key: Hidden in the grass against the southernmost outhouse is a spare key that unlocks all of the outside doors to the Vulture's mansion (area K). Anyone searching the area finds the key with a DC 20 Perception check.

H. Detention Pit

Combat Encounter (350 XP)

Local Dalesfolk who refuse to acknowledge the Vulture's authority are rounded up, brought to the Vulture's Roost, and detained in this 10-foot-deep pit until they have a change of heart or until the Vulture decides to dispose of them by hurling them over the cliff (area C).

Currently, the pit contains a small family (a farmer, his wife, and his two adolescent daughters) whose cottage was sacked after they refused to show the Vulture's soldiers "proper hospitality."

The pit contains nothing of value. Climbing out of the pit requires a DC 15 Athletics check.

Monsters: A human outlaw (see "Human Soldiers" for statistics) stands guard next to the pit.

Other Creatures: 4 human peasants. Their names are Daersil Vanek (father), Kalyse (mother), Eriana (eldest daughter), and Yalara (youngest daughter), All are noncombatants with 1 hit point and defenses 10.

Development: If the adventurers come across as friendly, the prisoners might ask for the party's help to liberate their homestead from the Vulture's soldiers. If the characters agree to help, feel free to create an encounter at the Vaneks' cottage using one of the poster maps in the *Dungeon Master's Kit*.

I. Graveyard

Exploration Encounter

A plain wooden fence surrounds a host of dirt graves where fourteen fallen soldiers are buried. They either died in training exercises or fell fighting monsters that prowl the countryside.

Treasure: The dead soldiers were buried with their gold as a token of respect. Each exhumed corpse yields a pouch containing 1d20 gp.

J. Barracks

Combat Encounter (2,900 XP)

This single-story wooden structure has a pitched ceiling reinforced with oak rafters. Ten sturdy wooden bunk beds are spaced evenly along the walls. Only half of the bunks are occupied at any given time; the remaining soldiers are awake and on duty in area B (the watchtowers) and area K (specifically areas K2 and K6). The building has two exits, located in the middle of the north and south walls, respectively.

Monsters: 6 Vulture's Roost sharpshooters, 4 human outlaws (see page 18 for statistics).

Tactics: The soldiers are asleep but awaken to cries of alarm. They are trained to sleep in their armor so that they can take up arms at a moment's notice. They keep their weapons near their bedsides or under their pillows.

Treasure: Each soldier has a pouch containing 1d20 gp.

K. The Vulture's Estate

Exploration Encounters and Combat Encounters (variable XP)

The centerpiece of the Vulture's stronghold is a fortified stone mansion built for comfort as well as defense. The Vulture is most likely to be encountered within, along with her half-orc lieutenants and dwarven servants (see "Vulture's Roost NPCs").

Monsters: Aleta Vanmarwin (the Vulture), Darok (half-orc deadeye), Szorp (half-orc headsplitter), 4 Ironvein dwarves (servants), 3 human outlaws. The outlaws are stationed in areas K2 and K6; the others can be found anywhere inside the mansion, at your discretion (see the "Villain Locations" sidebar on the next page for suggestions).

Read:

This regal stone mansion has a pitched roof pierced by multiple chimneys and adorned with east- and west-facing gables and tightly fitted clay tiles. The ground floor is bereft of windows, but wood-framed windows are spaced neatly around the upper level. Each is divided into smaller frames holding 6-inch-square panes of thick glass.

Draped on the outside walls of the estate are tattered black banners emblazoned with a distinctive symbol—that of a gold, stylized vulture's claw.

The banners on the outside walls are weatherworn and can be torn down with a DC 15 Strength check. The interior walls, floors, and rafters of the mansion are made of solid oak, not stone as one might expect.

The mansion has five ground-floor entrances: the main entrance to the south, a servants' entrance to the east, and two guard entrances to the north. All of these doors are locked at all hours (see "Features of the Stronghold"). One need only knock on a door, however, to summon a servant or guard from within.

Fireplaces: The smaller fireplaces have chimneys that are too narrow to climb into. The two large fireplaces in area K1 have chimneys wide enough for Small creatures to squeeze through, however. A creature that enters or starts its turn in a lit fireplace takes 1d6 fire damage and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).

Secret Doors: These doors blend in seamlessly with the surrounding woodwork and require a DC

VILLAIN LOCATIONS

Although they can be found in different parts of the mansion throughout the day, the Vulture and her half-orc lieutenants linger in particular areas, as determined by you or by consulting the following table:

Time or Event	The Vulture	Half-Orcs
11 p.m. to 5 a.m.	Area K17	Area K13
5 a.m. to 7 a.m.	Area K16	Outside
7 a.m. to 12 p.m.	Area K8	Area K8
12 p.m. to 1 p.m.	Area K5	Area K5
1 p.m. to 3 p.m.	Outside	Area K9
3 p.m. to 5 p.m.	Area K16	Outside
5 p.m. to 6 p.m.	Area K5	Area K5
6 p.m. to 9 p.m.	Area K8	Area K8
9 p.m. to 11 p.m.	Area K16	Area J
Vulture's Feast	Area K1	Areas K10/K15

When they are outside, the Vulture or her half-orc lieutenants are inspecting the grounds, meeting with patrols, or drilling the troops. The half-orcs also enjoy nightly gambling in the barracks (area J) between the hours of 9 p.m. and 11 p.m.

During the Vulture's feast, Szorp the half-orc stands guard on the north balcony (area K10) while his brother, Darok, takes a position on the south balcony (area K15).

25 Perception check to detect. They otherwise have statistics similar to normal doors (see above) and are opened simply by pushing or pulling on them.

K1. Feast Hall

This grand hall has a peaked roof with a forty-foot-high apex. An iron-wrought chandelier is suspended from the rafters by a thick chain so that it hangs fifteen feet above the floor, directly over a massive oak table surrounded by matching chairs. Covering the table is a magnificent set of gold dinnerware, glittering silver candelabras, and crystal wine glasses and decanters.

Two large stone hearths contain lively, crackling fires. Wide wooden staircases padded with luxurious carpet ascend to a balcony fifteen feet above, where an enormous multipaned window allows light to spill into the hall. The window is flanked by a pair of thin black banners bearing the symbol of a gold vulture's claw. Another balcony stands across from this one, set above the main entrance, but no staircases lead up to it.

The feast hall further is decorated with mounted shields and weapons, and no effort has been taken to conceal a number of arrow slits carved into the walls—a warning to guests, one imagines.

If the characters enter the hall once the Vulture's servants have set the feast, they see one or more entrées neatly laid out in the middle of the dining table. The other entrées are kept on tables in the kitchen (area K4) until the Vulture orders them brought out one by one.

The feast consists of the following appetizer, entrées, and dessert:

- The appetizer is a bowl of spicy stirge stew thickened with sheep's milk and served with a reed straw.
- The first entrée is a thin filet of Ashaba trout basking in tangy black-truffle oil and accented with heated apricots.
- The second entrée is broiled rabbit with brandy and plum sauce, sprinkled with parsley.
- The third entrée consists of skewers of sliced Moonsea eel, with bluebell peppers and onions on a bed of mashed pumpkin.
- The fourth entrée is roasted carbuncle, served in its shell and braised with beet sauce and sprinkled with garlic.
- The fifth entrée is baked grick wormling, its tentacles splayed open and its gullet stuffed with rice pilaf and diced celery.
- Dessert is a peeled, hard-boiled, honey-glazed cockatrice egg surrounded by a ring of dried apple chips.

Four human outlaws (see "Human Soldiers" for statistics) guard the feast hall, but they are hidden behind the arrow slits. Two stand watch in the areas labeled K2 (one per room), and two more are lurking in the gallery (area K6). If combat erupts in the feast hall, they attack with their crossbows. The arrow slits provide them superior cover.

The weapons and shields hanging on the walls can be removed and used, but none of them are magical. Two well-hidden secret doors give access to ladders leading to the gallery.

The balconies are described further in areas K10 and K15, respectively.

Chandelier: The iron chandelier hangs above the dining table at roughly the same height as the balcony floors and is nearly 10 feet in diameter. A skilled jumper could leap onto the chandelier from a nearby balcony; there's a 20-foot gap between the north balcony (area K10) and the chandelier, and between the chandelier and the south balcony (area K15). The chandelier can support up to 250 pounds of added weight. The chain suspending it is connected to a winch mounted on a wall of the southern balcony; the chandelier can be raised or lowered from there with a DC 10 Strength check.

Treasure: The Vulture's gold dinnerware set serves 16 people and is worth 4,000 gp. The six silver candelabras on the table are worth 250 gp apiece. The crystal glasses and decanters are worth a total of 2,500 gp, but they are fragile and difficult

to transport. At the head of the table, strapped to its underside, is a longsword, which the Vulture keeps handy in case one of her dinner guests turns violent.

K2. Guard Room

This empty room has arrow slits spaced evenly along the two far walls. Each arrow slit is 4 feet tall and tapers to a width of 5 inches.

There are two guard rooms, one on each side of the main entrance, and they are more or less identical. The dwarf servants keep the tile floor swept and the room clear of dust and cobwebs.

Monster: One human outlaw (see "Human Soldiers" for statistics) stands guard in each room, watching the main entrance and the feast hall (area K1).

Tactics: If combat erupts inside the mansion and the guard has no line of sight to enemies through the arrow slits, she or he grabs a halberd, leaves the room, and seeks out enemies to engage in melee combat.

Treasure: The guard carries a pouch containing 1d20 gp.

K3. Servants' Quarters

This dark but tidy room contains a pair of sturdy wooden beds with cozy-looking mattresses. A small unlocked trunk sits at the foot of each bed.

These two rooms are set aside for the Vulture's dwarf servants. The males (Starnbrow and Dezivan) share the western room, while the females (Grimvalda and Dunrain) share the eastern room. The walls are soundproofed so that the dwarves are not easily disturbed at night.

Monsters: The Vulture's four servants (see "Dwarf Servants" for statistics) usually retire to their rooms at 11 P.M. and stay there until 5 A.M., when they emerge to perform their morning chores.

Treasure: The trunks appear to contain nothing but fine clothing and worthless personal effects belonging to the dwarves. Each in fact contains a small secret compartment, no two of which are in the same place. These compartments are well hidden, requiring a DC 23 Perception check to detect.

Starnbrow's secret compartment contains a pouch of ten gems worth 50 gp each and a golden comb worth 25 gp.

Dezivan's compartment contains a platinum ring set with a ruby shard worth 1,500 gp. This ring is a clan heirloom and was given to Dezivan by his father.

Grimvalda's compartment contains a pouch of 1d20 gp and a small, copper-framed sketch of her husband, Daltagar (worth 15 gp), who runs a dwarven alehouse in Yhaunn.

Dunrain's compartment contains five scented letters from a distant and anonymous paramour, but nothing of monetary value.

K4. Kitchen

A fireplace dominates one wall of this kitchen, which is neatly organized, well swept, and thick with the scent of fine food. Clean tables stand in the middle of the room, and cupboards are against the walls. A stack of food crates, casks, and barrels fills one corner. In another corner rests a wooden wash bin, a scrubbing board, and a bucket of soap.

A secret door in one corner leads to the private dining room (area K5). Characters can also enter the adjoining room by crawling through the fireplace. A shuttered metal door in the back of the hearth allows this aperture to be closed.

The crates, casks, and barrels contain all manner of foodstuffs and ingredients, most of them stolen from caravans by the Vulture's soldiers. The containers bear markings of ownership that suggest they were acquired from all over the Dalelands.

Monsters: The Vulture's four servants (see "Dwarf Servants" for statistics) spend the bulk of their time here, preparing the feast. Grimvalda is lord and sovereign of the kitchen, and the other dwarves there follow her instructions and help her prepare the seven entrées that the Vulture has planned. The kitchen is also where the servants retreat to if violence erupts in the mansion.

Treasure: Amid the containers are six corked casks of fine wine worth 100 gp each. Each cask weighs 20 pounds. The wine in one of the casks is poisoned (DC 23 Heal or Perception check to discern). Anyone who sips from this cask might be affected by the poison.

Cask Poison Level 15 Poison

When masked by wine or other alcohol, this poison is hard to detect.

Poison 6,250 gp

Attack: +20 vs. Constitution; the target takes 5d10 poison damage and is weakened for 1 hour.

Miss: Half damage.

Above the fireplace mantel hangs a shelf lined with nine leather-bound books, each one packed with recipes. All of the recipes are written in the Vulture's hand, and many of them require rare and expensive ingredients. Each book is worth 250 gp to an interested buyer.

K5. Private Dining Room

A heavy round table made of sculpted oak stands in the middle of the room, surrounded by several straight-backed chairs with cushioned seats. Two ornate lanterns hang from the ceiling above the table, and fireplace is set into one wall. Across from the hearth hangs a rich tapestry depicting a sylvan scene.

The Vulture has private meals with her lieutenants and servants here. The room is unoccupied most of the day and night. The servants also convene here when they wish to spend some "family time" together. A secret door in one corner leads to the kitchen (area

K4). Characters can also enter the adjoining room by crawling through the fireplace, although a shuttered metal door in the back of the hearth allows this aperture to be closed.

Treasure: The tapestry depicts the forest kingdom of Cormanthor and is worth 500 gp intact. It weighs 30 pounds.

K6. Gallery

Black military banners emblazoned with a golden vulture's claw dress the northern wall of this gallery, and arrow slits line the southern wall.

The arrow slits peer into the feast hall (area K1), which can also be reached by a pair of secret doors at opposite ends of the gallery. Each arrow slit is 4 feet tall and tapers to a width of 5 inches.

Monsters: One human outlaw (see "Human Servants" for statistics) stands guard here and pays close attention to all that transpires in the feast hall.

Tactics: If combat erupts inside the mansion and the guard has no line of sight to enemies, he or she grabs a halberd and leaves the gallery in search of foes to engage in melee combat.

Treasure: The guard carries a pouch containing 1d20 gp.

K7. Parlor

This cozy parlor has wood-paneled walls adorned with mounted animal heads. Various stuffed beasts lurk in the corners of the room as well. Padded leather chairs rest before a darkened hearth, above which is mounted the head of a snarling gray wolf.

The stuffed beasts and heads are some of the Vulture's most prized trophies, claimed as part of her ongoing campaign to bring order and solace to the Dales. The walls are soundproofed, allowing the Vulture to conduct private negotiations here without fear of being disturbed or overheard.

Kimach Taias **Level 5 Defender**
Medium fey humanoid, half-elf

HP 51; **Bloodied** 25; **Healing Surges** 10 — **Initiative** +5
AC 22, **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 18 — **Perception** +7
Speed 6 — Low-light vision

Standard Actions

Longsword (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8 + 6 damage.
Effect: The target is marked until the end of Kimach's next turn.

Shortbow (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 15/30 (one creature); +11 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8 + 6 damage.
Effect: The target is marked until the end of Kimach's next turn.

Crippling Strike (weapon) ✦ **Recharge** if the attack misses
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +12 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8 + 4 damage, and the target is slowed and cannot shift (save ends both).

Minor Actions

Defender's Stance ✦ **At-Will** (1/round)
Effect: Kimach takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls and gains resist 5 to all damage until the end of his next turn.

Triggered Actions

Shield Ally ✦ **Encounter**
Trigger: An ally adjacent to Kimach is hit by an attack.
Effect (Immediate Interrupt): The triggering ally takes half the damage, and Kimach takes the other half.

Skills Acrobatics +10, Athletics +9, Stealth +10

Str 14 (+4)	**Dex** 16 (+5)	**Wis** 11 (+2)
Con 12 (+3)	**Int** 13 (+3)	**Cha** 16 (+5)

Alignment good — **Languages** Common, Elven
Equipment leather armor, longsword, shortbow, 20 arrows

A secret door leads to the adjoining war room (area K8), which can also be reached by crawling through the fireplace. A shuttered metal door in the back of the hearth allows this aperture to be closed.

K8. War Room

The wood-paneled walls of this room are adorned with military banners representing the various Dales, and the Vulture's own banner hangs prominently among them. A large round table dominates the room and has six large scrolls resting upon it. A darkened fireplace stands against one wall.

The Vulture uses this soundproofed room to plan patrols and raids. The door to the room is always locked, and only her half-orc lieutenants and dwarf servants are permitted to enter without permission. Strapped to the underside of the table are six longswords, just in case the Vulture finds herself pinned down in this room without her own weapons.

Treasure: The scrolls resting on the table present detailed, hand-drawn maps of the Dalelands and are worth 100 gp each.

K9. Dungeon

Beyond the secret door lies a dark and dusty chamber strung with cobwebs. Further exploration reveals a number of sinister devices used for torture and iron shackles bolted to the walls. In the middle of the room rests a cylindrical cage, and trapped behind its iron bars is a beaten and bloodied half-elf in torn clothing.

This room is off limits to the dwarf servants, which explains the dust and cobwebs.

The cage, which is barely 3 feet in diameter and 5 feet tall, has a barred door set into one side. A large padlock keeps the door shut, and Darok (see "Vulture's Roost NPCs") carries the only key. The lock can be picked with a DC 25 Thievery check or smashed to pieces; it has AC/Fortitude 25, Reflex 5, 20 hit points, and resist 10 to all damage. The cage has small wheels attached to its underside, allowing it to be rolled across the floor.

Characters who are captured and confined to this room are shackled to the walls; while shackled, they are effectively immobilized. The shackles have the same statistics as the lock on the cage.

Prisoner: The half-elf inside the cage is Kimach Taias, the captured Harper spy. He has 12 hit points

and 1 healing surge remaining. In addition, he is slowed and weakened until he takes an extended rest.

Kimach has provided a small amount of intelligence concerning Harper surveillance activities in the vicinity, and the Vulture plans to step up her patrols once the feast concludes and the Zhentarim force has departed. Kimach feels he has betrayed the Harpers by caving in under duress, and if set free, he plans to resign from the organization and return to a simpler life. Until then, he does his best to help the characters and his mother, Elariel, thwart the Vulture's plans.

Kimach's armor and weapons rest upon a small table next to the secret door. If released, Kimach takes the time to don his armor and grab the weapons before leaving the room.

K10. North Balcony

This balcony overlooks the feast hall and has side balconies running nearly the full length of the hall. Several doors lead off the balcony, and a magnificent window composed of dozens of 6-inch-square panes of glass set into wooden frames looks out over a cliff and down on a river valley. Hanging banners emblazoned with the Vulture's crest flank the window.

This balcony, along with the south balcony (area K15) is 15 feet high and 15 feet deep. A character can charge the window but requires a DC 20 Strength check to break through the multitude of small wooden frames. A failed check is enough to smash a few panes of glass, but the frames remain intact.

Monster: During the feast, Szorp (see "Vulture's Roost NPCs" for statistics) stands atop this balcony with crossbow in hand. He tries to remain within line of sight of his brother, Darok, who stands on the south balcony.

Tactics: If combat erupts in the feast hall (area K1), Szorp takes shots at enemies with his crossbow until he runs out of easy targets, at which point he draws his battleaxe and leaps into melee.

K11. Guest Quarters

This tidy bedchamber contains a neatly made bed, a stone hearth, a window box, and a few miscellaneous furnishings and adornments.

The servants keep these four rooms swept and ready for the Vulture's guests. They contain nothing of value.

K12. Sitting Room

This cozy room contains a pair of padded chairs and a window box with a padded bench, which doubles as a storage trunk.

There are two of these rooms, one attached to the half-orcs' quarters (area K13), and the other attached to the Vulture's bedchamber (area K17). The storage trunks in the window box contain neatly folded blankets and bundled furs, which provide added warmth during the winter.

K13. Lieutenants' Quarters

Although some effort has been made to keep this room clean, the floor is strewn with odd bits of soiled clothing, and the beds are covered with a jumble of furs. A blackened stone fireplace against the east wall has a crossed pair of throwing axes mounted above it. The window box contains a bench that doubles as a storage trunk.

A secret door next to the fireplace leads to area K14. The storage trunk in the window box contains a disorderly heap of heavy winter clothing, including two pairs of hide boots and two pairs of thick leather gloves. Buried beneath the clothing is the half-orcs' treasure (see "Treasure" below).

Monsters: The Vulture's two half-orc lieutenants (see "Vulture's Roost NPCs" for statistics) sleep here at night. They keep their weapons near their bedsides.

Treasure: The half-orcs keep a sack of 150 gp and two *elixirs of treasure finding* (level 5 version; *Mordenkainen's Magnificent Emporium*, page 94) hidden under the clothing in their storage trunk. Darok also keeps his lute (worth 12 gp) here when he's not playing it.

K14. Study

A darkened stone fireplace is set into the west wall, and low bookcases stand against the other walls beneath hanging tapestries depicting legendary battles between orcs and elves as well as humankind. In the middle of the room sits a desk and chair. Resting on the desk is an open book.

The Vulture encourages her lieutenants to read up on military history and has furnished them with a small library of books on the subject. Darok is an avid reader, but Szorp is not. None of the books are particularly valuable; the one on the desk is titled *Of Orcs and Men* and delivers a scholarly comparison of orcs and humans, ultimately concluding that they are more alike than not.

A secret door next to the fireplace leads to area K13.

Treasure: Four small tapestries (worth 50 gp each) hang on the walls. Each weighs 5 pounds.

K15. South Balcony

A sculpted wooden railing encloses the edge of this wide balcony that overlooks the feast hall. Two high-backed chairs with cushioned seats stand facing the hall as well. On the wall behind them hangs a life-sized portrait of a steel-eyed woman in armor, held in a varnished oak frame. An iron winch bolted to the western wall allows the chandelier in the feast hall to be slowly raised and lowered.

The portrait depicts the Vulture. It's well done but not particularly valuable. A character can use the winch to raise or lower the chandelier in area K1; operating it requires a DC 10 Strength check.

Monster: During the feast, Darok (see "Vulture's Roost NPCs" for statistics) perches here with crossbow

in hand. He tries to stay within sight of his brother, who stands guard atop the north balcony (area K10).

Tactics: Darok prefers to attack from a distance, using one of the balcony's high-backed chairs as partial cover. If he has no enemies in his line of sight, he leaps from the balcony onto the chandelier and attacks from that vantage point!

K16. Master Study

This tidy, wood-paneled study contains a stone hearth flanked by two polished shields hanging from hooks. The room also contains a desk and a matching chair. Behind the chair, on the north wall, hangs an ornate black banner with gold tassels and the gold-threaded emblem of a vulture's claw. Among the many items on the desk is a small golden idol. Low bookcases spaced evenly along the walls are stuffed with worn tomes and treatises.

Characters searching the desk find sheets of parchment, quills, jars of ink, and a wax seal bearing the Vulture's insignia, but nothing valuable. The bookcases contain tomes about local history, military strategy, famous military campaigns, and the gods. One of the more divinely inspired books conceals treasure (see below).

Monster: The Vulture (see "Vulture's Roost NPCs" for statistics) is here at various times throughout the day, drafting orders and reading up on military history.

Trap: A secret door in the southeast corner leads to the Vulture's bedchamber (area K17), but it is trapped. Mounted to the door is a hook with a shield dangling from it. Tugging down on the hook causes it to lower an inch and disarms the trap, which otherwise requires a DC 23 Perception check to detect and a DC 23 Thievery check to disarm. The secret door must be opened before the trap can be disarmed.

The trap consists of a spring-loaded scythe blade hidden in the door frame that swings down and cuts through anything that gets in its way. The hook resets when the secret door is closed.

Spring-Loaded Scythe Trap **Level 7 Trap**
Object XP 300

Detect Perception DC 23 **Initiative** –
Immune all attacks

Triggered Actions

⊕ **Hidden Scythe ✦ At-Will**
Trigger: A creature moves through the secret door without first disarming the trap.
Attack: Melee 0 (triggering creature); +10 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d8 + 6 damage.

Countermeasures

✦ **Disable:** Thievery DC 23 (standard action). *Success:* The trap is disarmed. *Failure (18 or lower):* The trap is triggered and makes an attack against the character.

Treasure: The small golden idol on the desk depicts Tempus, the god of war, and is worth 250 gp. The black banner hanging on the north wall is exquisitely crafted and worth 150 gp for the gold thread alone.

One particularly heavy book in the Vulture's collection bears the title *The Dawn of Hope: Bringing the Light of Lathander to the Lands of Darkness*. Its pages have been hollowed out to make room for a fat pouch containing 100 pp. If at any point she is forced to abandon her stronghold, the Vulture takes these coins with her to ensure that she can continue paying her troops while she settles elsewhere.

K17. Master Bedchamber

This large bedchamber is simply furnished. A neatly made bed stands in one corner across from a stone fireplace, above which hang a pair of crossed swords and a black shield bearing a gold vulture's-claw insignia. A cloak hangs from a hook next to the fireplace. A bench situated in a window box doubles as a storage trunk, and a heavy padlock holds it shut.

The cloak is nonmagical, but the hook it hangs from disarms the trap on the secret door leading to the Vulture's study (see area K16 for details).

Iron Cobra **Level 6 Skirmisher**
Medium natural animate (construct, homunculus) XP 250

HP 75; **Bloodied** 37 **Initiative** +7
AC 20, **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 17 **Perception** +9
Speed 7 Darkvision
Immune disease, poison

Traits

Guard Area
The iron cobra can use *poison the mind* against any creature in its guarded area, even if the power hasn't recharged and even if the target isn't taking ongoing poison damage.

Standard Actions

⊕ **Bite** (poison) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +11 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8 + 4 damage, and ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).

Poison the Mind (charm) ✦ **Recharge** ⚁ ⚂ ⚄ ⚅
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature taking ongoing poison damage); +9 vs. Will
Hit: The target is dazed and slowed (save ends both).

Move Actions

Slithering Shift ✦ At-Will
Effect: The iron cobra shifts up to 3 squares.

Skills Stealth +10

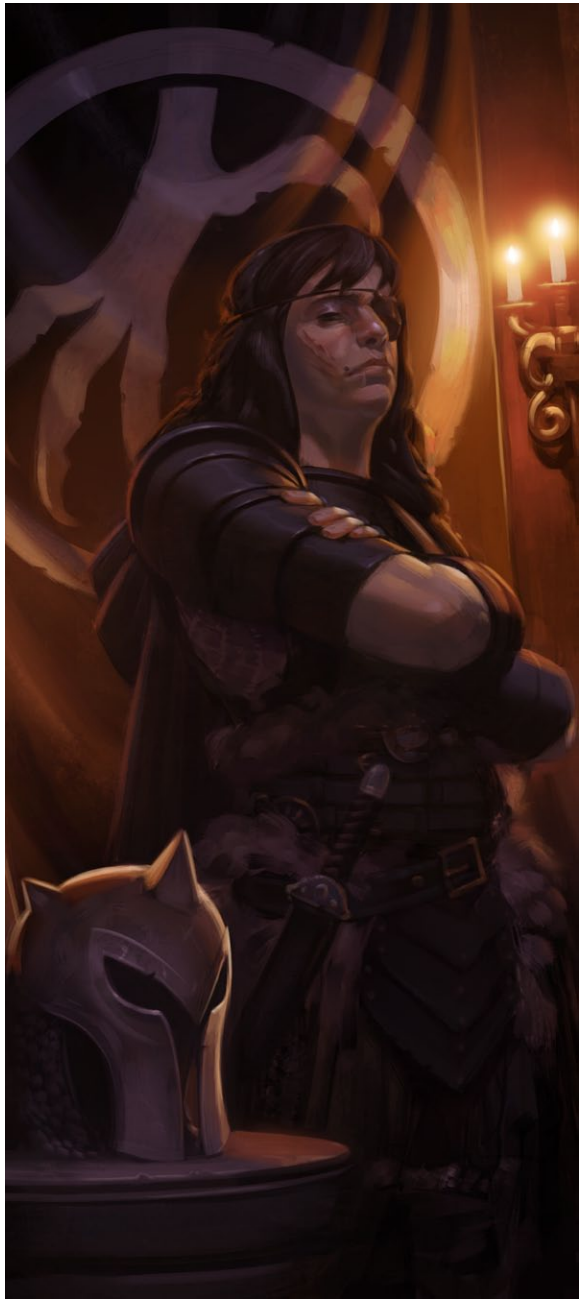
Str 17 (+6)	**Dex** 15 (+5)	**Wis** 13 (+4)
Con 19 (+7)	**Int** 5 (+0)	**Cha** 12 (+4)

Alignment unaligned **Languages** –

There is also a compartment above the fireplace mantel, hidden behind the black shield bearing the Vulture's emblem. If the shield is removed, the secret compartment can be spotted without a skill check. It is not trapped and contains treasure (see below).

The Vulture carries the key to the padlock securing her storage trunk. The lock can also be picked with a DC 25 Thievery check or smashed to pieces; it has AC/Fortitude 25, Reflex 5, 20 hit points, and resist 10 to all damage. The trunk's contents are described below.

Monsters: 1 iron cobra. This construct hides under the bed and attacks anyone who enters the room who is not the Vulture, a half-orc lieutenant, or a dwarf servant. At night, the Vulture (see "Vulture's



Roost NPCs" for statistics) sleeps here soundly, knowing that the homunculus is watching her back!

Treasure: In addition to neatly folded clothing and winter gear, the storage trunk in the window box contains a backpack, inside of which are ten days of trail rations, two *potions of cure moderate wounds* (*Mordenkainen's Magnificent Emporium*, page 96), a tinderbox, and a canteen of water. The Vulture keeps these supplies handy in case she needs to leave the stronghold in a hurry. The trunk also contains several doses of antidote to the poisoned wine kept in the kitchen (area K4).

The secret compartment above the mantel holds a small, unlocked coffer containing 450 gp. The Vulture uses this money to pay her troops.

Vulture's Roost NPCs

Grouped here for ease of reference are statistics for all of the nonplayer characters in the Vulture's Roost, including the evil Aleta Vanmarwin.

The Vulture

Aleta Vanmarwin was a troubled youth born and raised in Cormyr. She tried to join the Purple Dragons but found the military's regulations stifling. After failing to gain rank and respect in the Cormyrean militia, she fell in with a company of mercenaries and was drawn into various regional conflicts between Cormyr, Sembia, and various disgruntled neighbors. She fought many campaigns in the Dalelands and decided that was where she wanted to settle down.

Now calling herself the Vulture, Aleta applies force only when needed and would rather build bridges than burn them. She provides monetary incentives to soldiers who demonstrate both courage and resourcefulness, and she doesn't go out of her way to ruin innocent lives. She does, however, threaten to destroy anyone who raises arms against her, and she has no misgivings about slaughtering enemies in their sleep, pillaging fat caravans for money and food to feed her troops, and forging mutually beneficial alliances with rich, ambitious individuals such as herself.

The Vulture wants to bring peace to the Dalelands through military might, and she knows this goal will be much easier if the Zhentarim consider her an ally. She has no illusions, however; any such alliance

Aleta Vanmarwin **Level 8 Elite Soldier (Leader)**
Medium natural humanoid XP 700

HP 180; **Bloodied** 90 **Initiative** +7
AC 24, **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 21 **Perception** +10
Speed 5
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1

Standard Actions

⨁ **Longsword** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8 + 7 damage. If this damage bloodies the target, the target is dazed until the end of Aleta's next turn.
Effect: The target is marked until the end of Aleta's next turn.

Throwing Axe (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 5/10 (one creature); +13 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6 + 9 damage, and the target falls prone.

Minor Actions

Command Ally ✦ **At-Will** (1/round)
Effect: One ally within Aleta's line of sight can charge or make a basic attack as a free action. If the attack hits, it deals 5 extra damage.

Triggered Actions

Insistent Attack ✦ **At-Will**
Trigger: An enemy marked by Aleta makes an attack that doesn't include her as a target.
Effect (Immediate Reaction): Aleta makes a melee basic attack against the triggering enemy. If the attack hits, it deals 5 extra damage.

Skills Athletics +12, Bluff +13, Insight +10, Intimidate +13

Str 16 (+7)	**Dex** 13 (+5)	**Wis** 12 (+5)
Con 18 (+8)	**Int** 15 (+6)	**Cha** 18 (+8)

Alignment evil **Languages** Chondathan, Common
Equipment chainmail, shield, longsword, 2 throwing axes, *elixir of flying*

Half-Orc Deadeye	Level 8 Elite Artillery
Medium natural humanoid	XP 700
HP 134; **Bloodied** 67	**Initiative** +8
AC 22, **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 19	**Perception** +10
Speed 6 (8 while charging)	Low-light vision
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1	
Traits	
Close Combat Expert	
The deadeye's ranged attacks do not provoke opportunity attacks.	
Standard Actions	
Battleaxe (weapon) ✦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d8 + 7 damage.	
Shortbow (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Ranged 15/30 (one creature); +15 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d8 + 8 damage.	
Double Attack ✦ **At-Will**	
Effect: The deadeye uses *battleaxe* or *shortbow* twice.	
Dead Shot (weapon) ✦ **Recharge** if the attack misses	
Attack: Ranged 15/30 (one creature); +15 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d8 + 15 damage, and the target is slowed (save ends).	
Skills Athletics +12, Stealth +13, Thievery +13	
Str 17 (+7) **Dex** 18 (+8) **Wis** 12 (+5)	
Con 13 (+5) **Int** 15 (+6) **Cha** 14 (+6)	
Alignment evil **Languages** Common	
Equipment studded leather armor, battleaxe, shortbow, 30 arrows	

is temporary at best, but it buys her time to grow in strength and expand her influence and reputation.

Although few would consider her frivolous, the Vulture has a taste for gourmet food. She is fond of gathering rare ingredients so that her servants can prepare exotic feasts, and she spends a surprising amount of coin to acquire rare, hard-to-find recipes.

If her stronghold is on the verge of being overrun and defeat seems imminent, the Vulture takes flight. If she can, she grabs the pouch of platinum coins hidden in area K16 and the backpack hidden in area K17 before imbibing an *elixir of flying* (*Mordenkainen's Magnificent Emporium*, page 92) hidden in her left boot. She then flies northward—over the cliff—to discourage enemy pursuit.

Half-Orc Headsplitter	Level 8 Elite Brute
Medium natural humanoid	XP 700
HP 210; **Bloodied** 105	**Initiative** +4
AC 20, **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 20	**Perception** +5
Speed 6 (8 while charging)	Low-light vision
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1	
Standard Actions	
Battleaxe (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. AC	
Hit: 3d8 + 8 damage.	
Shortbow (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Ranged 15/30 (one creature); +13 vs. AC	
Hit: 3d8 + 4 damage.	
Double Attack ✦ **At-Will**	
Effect: The headsplitter uses *battleaxe* or *shortbow* twice.	
Triggered Actions	
Furious Assault ✦ **Encounter**	
Trigger: The headsplitter's attack deals damage.	
Effect (Free Action): The triggering attack deals 2d8 extra damage.	
Skills Athletics +13, Endurance +11, Intimidate +11	
Str 19 (+8) **Dex** 11 (+4) **Wis** 12 (+5)	
Con 15 (+6) **Int** 8 (+3) **Cha** 14 (+6)	
Alignment evil **Languages** Common	
Equipment studded leather armor, battleaxe, shortbow, 20 arrows	

Darok and Szorp (Half-Orc Lieutenants)

The Vulture found these two half-orc brothers hiding out in a forest near her lair, hunted by the authorities for a string of murders. She took them in and earned their trust, and now they are like sons to her.

Darok (half-orc deadeye) is the older brother, gifted with a shrewd mind, boundless patience, and some minor musical talent (he plays the lute well). Szorp (half-orc headsplitter), who is one year younger than Darok, is an ill-tempered thug who lets his brother do the heavy mental lifting. They are never out of each other's sight, and they are unfailingly loyal to the Vulture, doing whatever she asks of them. They gladly give their lives for her.

Darok is a master card player and carries around a deck of *Three-Dragon Ante*™ cards that the Vulture gave him a few years back. His brother doesn't really understand the strategy and nuances of the game, but he likes the art on the cards. Szorp likes to pick his teeth with a skinning knife made of leather-wrapped bone while listening to Darok play his lute. He also likes to relax while Darok reads to him.

In addition to his gear, Darok carries an iron key that unlocks the prisoner cage in area K9.

Dwarf Servants

The Vulture's household includes four members of the Ironvein clan, a respectable family of hill dwarves known throughout Battledale. The Ironveins are the closest thing to family Aleta Vanmarwin has ever known, next to her half-orc lieutenants. She enjoys their company and trusts the dwarves' counsel when it comes to nonmilitary matters. And they love her in return.

Characters expecting to find abused, downtrodden servants in the Vulture's employ will be shocked to learn that the Ironveins are well treated and of cheery disposition. They wear gold-threaded vests and loose-fitting pants trimmed with gemstones, and they regard their mistress as someone deserving of respect, although they acknowledge that "Lady Vanmarwin" is far from perfect. (They do not refer to her as "the Vulture," as her lieutenants and soldiers do.)

The Ironveins rally around their mistress in times of need, but they are not able to protect her effectively. Clever characters can use the dwarves as hostages to stay the Vulture's hand, although Aleta would sooner sacrifice a servant than cave in to outrageous demands.

The head of the servant household is Starnbrow Ironvein, a hale, good-humored dwarf with a flowing golden beard and full head of hair. He is joined by his younger sister, Grimvalda, his niece, Dunrain, and his nephew, Dezivan. When they are not performing

4 Ironvein Dwarves	Level 5 Minion Brute
Medium natural humanoid	XP 50 each
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. **Initiative** +1	
AC 17, **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 17	**Perception** +3
Speed 5	Low-light vision
Traits	
Stand the Ground	
The dwarf can move 1 square fewer than the effect specifies when subjected to a pull, a push, or a slide.	
Steady-Footed	
The dwarf can make a saving throw to avoid falling prone when an attack would knock it prone.	
Standard Actions	
Club (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC	
Hit: 7 damage, or 10 damage if the target is adjacent to one or more of the dwarf's allies.	
Str 13 (+3) **Dex** 9 (+1) **Wis** 13 (+3)	
Con 15 (+4) **Int** 10 (+2) **Cha** 11 (+2)	
Alignment unaligned **Languages** Common, Dwarven	
Equipment club	

chores, the Ironveins relax in their quarters (area K3) or spend "family time" in the private dining room (area K5). Like all dwarves, the Ironveins take great pride in their work, and they take umbrage when unwelcome intruders defy their mistress or question her hospitality.

Human Soldiers

The Vulture employs two kinds of soldiers to defend her stronghold: Vulture's Roost sharpshooters and human outlaws. The sharpshooters are posted on the watchtowers along the perimeter (area B), while the outlaws defend the mansion (area K). Off-duty soldiers are usually found in the barracks (area J).

In addition to these soldiers, the Vulture employs dozens more to patrol the countryside around her lair. These soldiers inhabit abandoned cottages and farms throughout the region, but they return to the Vulture's Roost at least once per week to make reports and receive new orders.

8 Human Outlaws	Level 8 Soldier
Medium natural humanoid	XP 350 each
HP 87; **Bloodied** 43	**Initiative** +8
AC 24, **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 19	**Perception** +4
Speed 5	
Traits	
Threatening Reach	
While armed with a halberd, the outlaw can make opportunity attacks against enemies within 2 squares of it.	
Standard Actions	
Halberd (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +13 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d10 + 5 damage.	
Pushback Strike (weapon) ✦ **Recharge** ⚄ ⁞⁞	
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +13 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d10 + 5 damage, the outlaw can push the target 1 square, and the target falls prone.	
Crossbow (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Ranged 15/30; +13 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d8 + 7 damage.	
Str 16 (+7) **Dex** 14 (+6) **Wis** 11 (+4)	
Con 15 (+6) **Int** 10 (+4) **Cha** 12 (+5)	
Alignment unaligned **Languages** Common	
Equipment chainmail, halberd, crossbow, 20 bolts	

Zhentarim Visitors

The Zhentarim delegation sent to collect the Harper spy consists of a Zhent war mage named Toren Witherfield (a pale-skinned human with black hair and bloodshot eyes) and four Zhent soldiers clad in black scale armor and wearing spiked helms fitted with visors. Each of them rides an unarmored black horse.

Toren has seen many battles in the past decade. In fact, he has grown weary of war and would like to devote more time to his arcane studies, but the Zhentarim are determined to strengthen their foothold in the Dales. Consequently, Toren travels the area in search of ambitious, wealthy individuals who are willing to join the organization's ranks or keep its many enemies distracted. It's a task he loathes, but a necessary evil. Toren's initial concerns about the Vulture are quickly put at ease once he finally meets her. He finds the warlord refreshingly forthright and honest.

12 Vulture's Roost Sharpshooters	Level 6 Artillery
Medium natural humanoid, human	XP 250 each
HP 55; **Bloodied** 27	**Initiative** +7
AC 20, **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 17	**Perception** +10
Speed 6	
Standard Actions	
Short Sword (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +11 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d6 + 7 damage.	
Crossbow (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Ranged 15/30 (one creature); +13 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d8 + 5 damage.	
Move Actions	
Careful Aim ✦ **At-Will**	
Effect: The sharpshooter chooses an enemy it can see. If it can still see that enemy at the start of its next turn, its crossbow power targets the enemy's Reflex, instead of AC, and deals 5 extra damage against it. These benefits last until the end of that turn.	
Free Actions	
Archer's Decoy ✦ **Recharge** when first bloodied	
Effect: The sharpshooter gains a +2 bonus to AC and Reflex until the start of its next turn.	
Skills Stealth +12	
Str 14 (+5) **Dex** 19 (+7) **Wis** 15 (+5)	
Con 13 (+4) **Int** 10 (+3) **Cha** 10 (+3)	
Alignment evil **Languages** Common	
Equipment studded leather, short sword, crossbow, 20 bolts	

Toren's soldiers don't have much to say. They are quiet and brooding, but quick to draw blades at the slightest provocation. Their leader (Toren's lieutenant) is 30-year-old Serence Harke, the disowned eldest son of an abusive and corrupt Hillsfar merchant. Harke lost his inheritance when he conspired with his sister to murder his father. His sister also joined the Zhentarim but was killed in a raid last autumn; this loss has made him cold-hearted and ruthless beyond measure.

Zhent War Mage	**Level 6 Artillery**
Medium natural humanoid, human	XP 250
HP 56; **Bloodied** 28	**Initiative** +6
AC 19, **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 18	**Perception** +6
Speed 6	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
Dagger (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +11 vs. AC	
Hit: 3d4 + 6 damage.	
Force Bolt (force, implement) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +11 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 2d4 + 9 force damage.	
Zhent Flash (radiant, implement) ✦ **Encounter**	
Attack: Close burst 1 (creatures in the burst); +11 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 2d6 + 6 radiant damage, and the target is blinded until the end of the mage's next turn.	
Fire Blast (fire, implement) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Area burst 1 within 10 (creatures in the burst); +11 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 1d6 + 8 fire damage.	
Black Vapors (poison, implement) ✦ **Encounter**	
Attack: Area burst 2 within 20 (creatures in the burst); +11 vs. Fortitude	
Hit: 1d6 + 8 poison damage, and ongoing 5 poison damage and a -2 penalty to attack rolls (save ends both).	
FREE ACTION	
Wand of Accuracy ✦ **Encounter**	
Trigger: The mage makes an attack roll with an implement power.	
Effect (Free Action): The mage gains a +3 bonus to the attack roll.	
Skills Arcana +13, Diplomacy +9, Dungeoneering +11, Insight +11	
Str 10 (+3) **Dex** 16 (+6) **Wis** 16 (+6)	
Con 14 (+5) **Int** 20 (+8) **Cha** 12 (+4)	
Alignment evil **Languages** Chondathan, Common	
Equipment robes, dagger, wand (implement)	

4 Zhent Soldiers	**Level 5 Soldier**
Medium natural humanoid, human	XP 200 each
HP 63; **Bloodied** 31	**Initiative** +6
AC 21, **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 16	**Perception** +2
Speed 5	
TRAITS	
Zhent Phalanx	
While the soldier is adjacent to an ally, enemies cannot gain combat advantage by flanking the soldier.	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
Longsword (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d8 + 4 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the soldier's next turn.	
Crossbow (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Ranged 15/30 (one creature); +10 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d8 + 4 damage.	
Sly Cut (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature marked by the soldier); +10 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d8 + 7 damage, and the target is slowed (save ends).	
Tide of Iron (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d8 + 4 damage, the soldier can push a Large or smaller target 1 square, and the soldier can shift 1 square into the space the target vacated.	
Skills Endurance +9, Intimidate +9, Streetwise +9	
Str 18 (+6) **Dex** 15 (+4) **Wis** 11 (+2)	
Con 15 (+4) **Int** 10 (+2) **Cha** 15 (+4)	
Alignment evil **Languages** Chondathan, Common	
Equipment scale armor, heavy shield, longsword, crossbow, 20 bolts	

Concluding the Adventure

If the characters ambush the Zhents as they leave the Vulture's Roost with their prisoner, the impetus to attack the stronghold is greatly reduced. Left undisturbed, the Vulture remains a growing threat in the region, and it's likely that the characters will cross swords with her at some point. After reuniting Elariel with her son (or not, as the case might be), they might hear rumors that the Vulture is forging another alliance, perhaps with a Cormyrean bandit lord who served with her in some past military campaign. They could also be hired by Dales merchants who are tired of having their caravans ransacked by her patrols.

If the Zhents escape with Kimach Taias, the young Harper is quite likely never to be seen again, unless he resurfaces as a charmed or enslaved Zhentarim agent. On the other hand, if Kimach is rescued, he's grateful to the characters but doesn't see much future for himself as a spy. His torture at the hands of the Vulture's half-orc lieutenants has forever scarred his psyche, and he aims to pursue a less perilous life and maybe start a family.

Eoghan would like nothing more than to free the treant spirits trapped in the palisade encircling the Vulture's Roost, and he urges the characters to find some ritual or other means to do so. This new quest could take the adventurers to some other exciting corner of the Dalelands, beyond the Vulture's sphere of influence, or on a hunt for the evil witch who bound the spirits in the first place.

If the Vulture survives the loss of her stronghold, she gathers her marauding soldiers and retreats into the wilderness, perhaps hiding out in a ruined manor or an ally's rustic estate. She has enough troops and resources at her disposal to remain an active threat in the region, but any dream of vengeance must wait until she's built a new roost or recaptured her old one. Conversely, if the Vulture is taken into custody, her allies or some former comrade-in-arms might attempt to free her.

About the Authors

Brian Cortijo is a freelance designer and full-time university lackey, which means he looks at the college equivalent of character sheets all day. His most recent work includes "History Check: The Many Deaths of Manshoon" (*Dragon* 415) and "The Ecology of the Malaugrym" (*Dungeon* 206).

Christopher Perkins is the D&D Senior Producer at Wizards of the Coast. He likes villains with redeeming traits, and yes, he knows that one of the adventure's bad guys is named after a trout found in Icewind Dale.

Blood of Gruumsh

A D&D® adventure for characters of levels 4-6

By Steve Winter

Illustration by Zoltan Boros and Beth Trott

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"Blood of Gruumsh" is a Dungeons & Dragons® adventure set in a ruined religious colony that was the target of a massacre and a subsequent cover-up. A thorough investigation reveals a dark stain on certain followers of Corellon.

If you have the *Dungeon Command*™: *Blood of Gruumsh*™ faction pack, you can use the miniatures from that set to represent several of the monsters in this adventure.

Background

Somewhere in the deep forest lies a derelict elven religious colony. Vines and overgrowth now obscure its elegant beauty, and brush chokes its soaring halls. This colony thrived quietly for generations before a sudden, brutal raid destroyed it. No survivors escaped to tell the tale, and those outsiders who did know of its existence blotted all traces of it from the records—or so they believed.

Now, almost two hundred years later, a young elf cleric at a nearby temple of Corellon has stumbled

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across scant mentions in church records of a heretical sect in the forest. "What was its heresy?" he wondered. "What became of it?"

So he asked the temple's elder clerics, but they were unusually tight-lipped on the subject. All they would tell him was that the sect consisted of debased elves who worshiped both Gruumsh and Corellon, and that orcs destroyed it because it's in their nature to destroy.

Though the records the cleric discovered are frustratingly sparse, they contain enough clues to contradict that claim. The cleric, Tathar of Turilon, wants answers. The temple patriarch warned him to leave the question of the sect alone and forbade him to investigate further, but if Tathar hires adventurers to explore the ruins, then *he* won't be the one doing the investigating.

A Tale of Heresy

The inhabitants of the community called it simply "the Colony." They paid due homage to Corellon, Sehanine, and the other members of the elven pantheon, but they also added a saint unique to their own worship: Phayrd, Banished Daughter, the Blood of Gruumsh.

According to the sect's mythology, Phayrd was the daughter of an elf mother and the god Gruumsh One-Eye, He Who Never Sleeps, brother and nemesis of Corellon, and the sworn foe of all elves. Elf scholars and clerics doubt that such a half-breed creature could even exist—and if it did, it would be an abomination of the most horrid sort.

This heretical sect maintained that Phayrd not only could exist, but did. A legend now lost to time maintained that her mother and her orc stepfather, both cast out of their respective societies, raised Phayrd together deep in the woods. Phayrd's sect believed that the child, with her mixed, semidivine blood, might someday heal the rift between elves and orcs. Instead, she died a martyr's death before fulfilling her life's purpose.

Phayrd's sect sought to further her work by bringing like-minded elves and orcs together in peaceful, worshipful communities. Such societies were understandably rare and justifiably reclusive.

The members of the Colony settled in a dense forest, where they hoped that their community would remain undiscovered. Elves and orcs lived there communally for generations, until the followers of Corellon raised a new temple at the edge of the forest—the temple where Tathar now resides. In those unsettled days, the temple's members were more militant than they are now, and many were followers of Kord as well as Corellon. It wasn't long before rangers hunting in the forest discovered the Colony and reported its existence to the clerics. A war party from the temple fell on the Colony and, in Corellon's name, slaughtered every living creature there. The temple elders erased all mention of the Colony's discovery, heresy, and destruction from the records—or so the clerics believed, until Tathar stumbled across one.

The temple's two eldest leaders know the truth, because they accompanied the war party as young initiates. They believe the attack was justified, but they also understand that its brutality would reflect badly on the more moderate temple in today's world. Blaming the slaughter on orcs should satisfy Tathar and deflect any guilt from the temple.

Is the Tale True?

The answer to this question is up to you. The heretical cult certainly existed and can still have adherents in your campaign if you want them. Whether Phayrd was the half-elf daughter of Gruumsh and a true demigod or just a myth is your call. Residents of the Colony believed in her, and that fact is enough for this adventure.

Synopsis

Tathar of Turilon approaches the characters surreptitiously and engages them to undertake a mission for him (or see "Hooks," below). He provides directions that can lead the heroes to the site of the Colony, where he wants them to learn everything they can about its past and the fate of its inhabitants.

The trip to the Colony is uneventful unless you choose to introduce one or two forest encounters.

Once at the site of the Colony, the characters can explore, uncover clues, and deal with its current residents: a wereboar, a dire boar, an owlbear, giant spiders, a dryad, and several wraiths.

The characters, however, are not the only ones curious about the Colony. Venak, an orc cleric of Gruumsh, has experienced a few visions relating to the fabled, heretical Blood of Gruumsh, and the subsequent downfall of the Phayrd cult by murder and massacre. The concept of mixing orc and elf blood is as repugnant to orcs as it is to elves, but like Tathar, Venak has become curious enough to seek out the truth. He has assembled a small war band to find the Colony and verify whether his vision was true. If so, it could provide the spark to unite feuding orc tribes against the elves.

Venak's force arrives after the characters do. This war band is the chief obstacle the characters must overcome to complete their mission.

Hooks

The most direct hook is for Tathar of Turilon to approach the characters covertly with an offer of employment. If the characters have encountered or aided another elf cleric in the past, use that nonplayer character instead. Tathar explains as much as he must to gain the characters' confidence, but he is growing paranoid about the temple elders and doesn't want to admit too much. If Tathar's suspicions are

correct, then this is serious heresy that he's investigating, and he wants to know the truth about it.

The main surprises for Tathar in the Colony's history are that the residents were almost equally divided between elves and orcs, and that it was warriors from his temple who carried out the massacre, not roving orcs. If the characters bring back evidence of that latter fact, he is horrified to learn of it.

The characters might also have their own reasons to investigate this legend. If one of them is an elf cleric, let that character stumble onto the legend in a temple library, instead of using Tathar. A character who has elf or orc blood might recall childish bogeyman stories about Gruumsh's monstrous offspring. Such tales always contain more fiction than fact, but they could spark curiosity in the characters.

Finally, the heroes could simply stumble onto the Colony's doorstep while traveling (or while lost) in the forest. They could pick up the owlbear's trail and track it to its lair. Or they could be seeking a sheltered spot where they can hole up against prowling orcs. (Venak's war band, with reinforcements, is combing the forest for the Colony—but for all the characters know, the orcs could be hunting them.)

Quests

The characters can complete two quests during the adventure.

MAJOR QUEST: BRING ANSWERS TO TATHAR OF TURILON
5th-Level Major Quest (200 XP/character)

Coming back to Tathar with precise information about Phayrd and the Blood of Gruumsh legend, along with proof that warriors from Tathar's temple were responsible for the destruction of the colony and the murder of everyone there, earns each character 200 XP.

MAJOR QUEST: DESTROY VENAK'S WAR BAND
5th-Level Major Quest (200 XP/character)

Destroying Venak's war band (see "Showdown") is worth 200 XP for each character in the group. If Venak survives without learning anything about the Blood of Gruumsh, characters earn 100 XP apiece instead.

Miniatures

The miniatures in the *Dungeon Command: Blood of Gruumsh* faction pack are the perfect accompaniment to this adventure. You can use them in any way you wish, but the following pairings are excellent choices.

Miniature	Monster in Adventure
Orc Archer	Orc Archer
Orc Drudge	Orc Savage
Orc Barbarian	Orc Rampager
Orc Druid	Venak, Orc Storm Shaman
Orc Chieftain	Orc Pummeler
Ogre	Ogre Mercenary
Boar	Dire Boar
Owlbear	Owlbear
Wereboar	Angrad Nénharma

The Colony

At its height, the Colony was more extensive than the map indicates. The overgrowth of the residences is so extensive now that they're almost impossible to locate. Only the sturdier, communal areas remain.

The forest surrounding the Colony is uncommonly thick. If you choose to map it, every square in a radius of one-half mile should be difficult terrain. Exceptions exist where the owlbear has plowed out hunting trails of its own.

The Colony's "structures" are hollowed out of this dense foliage. Their floors are made of packed earth (at ground level) or woven of living branches and vines (at upper levels). The ceilings are 15 feet high unless noted otherwise, and upper floors are 5 feet thick. Characters equipped with axes could cut a Medium-size hole down through a floor in 1 hour. Using a tool other than an axe doubles the time, as does cutting up instead of down.

The chambers don't have walls in the normal sense. Instead, interwoven branches and vines enclose each of the inner spaces. After growing together for 200 years, such barriers have a density similar to the thickest of hedges.

These walls are blocking terrain, but a character who begins a move action adjacent to a wall square can force his or her way into that square with a DC 21 Athletics check. If the check fails, the character doesn't move and that move action ends. If the check succeeds, the character moves 1 square into the wall and that move action ends. A character in a wall square is squeezing and can move from a wall square into clear or difficult terrain normally.

The middle level is 20 feet above the ground, and the upper level is 40 feet above the ground. Characters who step out of an upper chamber's wall into the difficult terrain outside must fly, teleport from branch to branch, or climb. Climbing is necessary for both horizontal and vertical movement while above the ground. Most characters' speeds are halved for the difficult terrain and halved again for climbing. At

TACTICAL PLACEMENT

The tactical encounters in this adventure are highly variable. Starting locations for characters and monsters can change based on the characters' actions. When combat begins, set up opponents to match the situation.

ground level, characters need only deal with difficult terrain.

Forest squares are heavily obscured.

Because the Colony was wiped out so rapidly, it still contains many of the resident elves' and orcs' furnishings and belongings. Characters who spend 10 minutes searching an area might find something useful, or at least something interesting. No skill check is necessary to find such items because they aren't purposefully concealed; they're just overgrown or covered by a blanket of fallen leaves and vegetation. Select from the following list or make up your own items. Any of these items can be ruined, damaged but repairable, or in usable condition.

Arrows
Bones, elf
Bones, orc
Book
Boots, leather
Bowl, copper
Candlestick, silver
Cask, small
Chimes, wooden
Cloak, folded
Decanter, crystal
Decorative chain
Dishes, wooden
Gloves
Helmet, elf
Helmet, orc
Holy symbol
Hourglass
Jewelry beads
Lantern
Musical instrument
Needle and fine thread
Roll of parchment
Sandals, leather
Silk cord
Statuette, wooden
Trunk, unopened
Weapon
Wine flask (full)
Wooden stool

1. Grand Hall

Exploration Encounter

The grand entrance hall was designed to make an impression on visitors. After a century of neglect, it still can.

Light: Originally, skillfully positioned skylights pierced the canopy, but overgrowth has now clogged most of them. The light that gets through now provides only dim illumination.

A few shafts of green-filtered sunlight penetrate the forest canopy to reveal a grand hall. Its arched ceiling of beautifully twined branches soars a full 50 feet above the ground. The trunks of the trees supporting this sylvan ceiling bear intricate, symmetrical designs that seem to be part of the wood. In its heyday, this hall would have been a marvel of living architecture. Now, vines hang thickly overhead, thorny brush encroaches through the lovingly sculpted green walls, and weeds grow waist-high across the floor.

Perception DC 14: *The tall weeds growing throughout the chamber hide dozens of elf and orc skeletons.*

Nature DC 14 (trained only): *A large boar has passed through this area several times in the last week.*

The Grand Hall never had any furnishings; it was simply an open space for receptions and gatherings. Aside from the encroaching forest, it hasn't changed from its original state. The patterns in the tree trunks were not carved—they are the result of skillfully grafting different types of wood and vines onto the trunks.

2. Ready Room

Exploration Encounter

The Colony's small contingent of guards stood watch in this room. Though the sentries fought bravely to the end, they were bottled up by the initial onslaught of the elves and couldn't avert the inevitable.

Light: Dim light filters through the canopy.

The trees lining this area are so closely spaced that they form an almost solid wall. The bones of humanoids litter the floor and pile up beside the entryway, which seems to be the only way into the chamber. Scavengers have dragged the bones around the room to such an extent that it's impossible to tell how many fell here. The remains of an upended table and several benches are easy to spot in the greenery.

Perception DC 14: *A fierce fight must have taken place here to account for the large number of bolts and arrowheads embedded in the trees. Sturdy pegs in the trees could have supported considerable weight.*

The Colony built this room to be easily defensible, so it's an ideal place for the characters to take a long rest or to use as a sanctuary if they're hard pressed by enemies. A single character can block the entryway effectively.

The pegs in the trees were for hanging up the guards' shields, weapons, and other equipment.

3. Owlbear Den

Exploration Encounter

An owlbear uses this room for its den.

Light: Dim light filters through the canopy.

A powerful animal smell fills this enclosed space. The ground is hard-packed and bare except where leaves and branches have been scraped into a rough nest. Animal bones litter the floor, and the surrounding trees bear the scars of claws as high as 10 feet above the ground.

Across the chamber, stair steps spiral around the trunk of a large tree, but all of them below 10 feet from the ground are smashed. The remaining steps ascend through a hole in the greenery that forms the ceiling.

Nature DC 10: *A large carnivore makes its lair here. The bones on the floor are from deer, foxes, and other large forest animals. A creature with powerful jaws has cracked and gnawed them.*

Perception DC 14: *Dozens of birds squawk somewhere above, but not in this chamber.*

The owlbear isn't home when characters enter its den. When it returns, it immediately picks up the scent of intruders. Thereafter, characters might hear it or catch an occasional glimpse of a large shape through

Up to 12
Down to 3
Up to 16
N
W
E
S
2
3
12
15
Entrance
1
4
14
19
13
Webs
Up to 18
Down to 15
5
Pool
10
16
11
9
6
Traps
7
17
18
8
Down to 7
Down to 19
Up to 8
Ground Level
Mid Level
Top Level

the foliage, but they shouldn't encounter the owlbear directly until their battle against the wereboar (area 7).

Buried in the nest are the remains of a dwarf ranger who stumbled across the owlbear's path a few months ago. The items in the nest include his skull, a magic throwing hammer, a large shield, a gashed and bloodstained suit of hide armor that has been gnawed beyond repair, and a few bits of treasure.

Climbing the 10 feet to the lowest intact steps requires a DC 15 Athletics check.

Treasure: Characters who search the remains of the dead dwarf find 16 gp and a *throwing hammer +1*.

4. Salon

Exploration Encounter

The elves used this chamber as an informal social space. Here they could gather and discuss whatever was on their minds, from philosophy to gossip.

Light: Dim light filters through the canopy.

Mounds of waist-high greenery obscure angular shapes scattered through this space. In a few places, gaps in the overgrowth reveal that the shapes beneath are tables, chairs, and benches built of simple, heavy timber. The trunks of the surrounding trees bear graceful, frivolous designs.

Clearing away some of the brush reveals that the furniture has survived in remarkably good condition, thanks to its sturdy, unpretentious construction. Anyone who pokes through the encroaching underbrush finds the remains of five elves and three orcs (no check needed).

Treasure: Three jeweled silver goblets and a silver tray worth a total of 610 gp lie beneath an overturned table.

5. Pool

Exploration Encounter

The shallow pool in this room is actually a powerful oracular device. If the characters figure out its function, the pool can answer important questions for them.

Light: Dim light filters through the canopy.

A pool of water occupies the center of this circular space in the modified forest. Lilies crowd its edges and vines grow out across its surface, but the water looks clear and fresh.

Characters who inspect the chamber might learn the following information by making the appropriate skill checks.

Perception DC 14: Animals come to this pool to drink. Most of the tracks are those of deer and small creatures, but an immense bear and at least one wild boar also visit regularly.

Perception DC 21: A shiny object is glinting from beneath a mound of greenery.

Nature DC 14 (trained only): If the character has tracked an owlbear or a dire boar before, he or she recognizes the large tracks for what they are.

Arcana DC 21 (to detect magic): The pool is magical. An additional source of magic (the bowl) is hidden beneath a low mound of greenery.

Any character who dips the bowl into the pool and fills it with water can make a DC 16 Arcana check. If the check succeeds, the character understands that he or she can ask the pool one question by framing it mentally, then sweeping a hand gently across the surface of the water in the bowl. The answer appears as an image in the water. The question must be answerable in no more than three words; otherwise, the pool does not respond at all. The pool answers only one question a day.

6. Lower Garden

Exploration Encounter

This chamber was once a beautiful garden. Although no one has tended it for decades, traces of its former beauty are still evident.

Light: Bright light shines through gaps in the canopy.

Traps: The wereboar Angrad Nénharma has protected the main path through the chamber with a spear trap and the left-hand path with a concealed pit trap. The spear trap consists of sharpened stakes lashed to springy tree limbs positioned to stab any creature on the path. The pit is just 5 feet deep, but poisoned stakes line the bottom. Nénharma uses only the right-hand path.

Shafts of light stream down through cunningly placed gaps in the canopy far above. A profusion of multicolored plants fills the chamber. From the entrance, overgrown but still visible pathways branch and snake into the greenery.

Nature DC 14: *The surrounding woods have encroached into this chamber as much as they have in all the others, but growing alongside the brush and scrub trees are exotic, aromatic flowers and stunted ornamental trees not native to this forest.*

Perception DC 16: *One of the pathways into the chamber is broader than the others and is probably the main path. Only the narrow trail to the right shows signs of recent traffic, and whoever used it attempted to conceal the evidence.*

The traps are unlikely to cause serious injury to characters. Their dual purposes are to warn Nénharma of intruders and to demonstrate to the players that this place is not all flowers and reflecting pools.

Springing Spear **Level 5 Trap**
Object XP 200

Detect Perception DC 22 Initiative +7
HP 20
AC 5, **Fortitude** 10, **Reflex** 5, **Will** –
Immune necrotic, poison, psychic, all conditions, forced movement. ongoing damage except fire

Triggered Actions

⊕ **Attack ✦ Encounter**

Trigger: A creature enters a trapped square.
Attack (Immediate Reaction): Melee 0 (triggering creature); +10 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6 + 13 damage.

Countermeasures

✦ **Disable:** Thievery DC 15 (standard action). *Success:* The character disables the tripwire or cuts the lashings on the spring branch, disabling the trap.

Spiked Pit (5 Feet Deep) **Level 3 Trap**
Object XP 150

Detect Perception DC 21 **Initiative** –
Immune attacks

Triggered Actions

⊕ **Attack** (poison) **✦ At-Will**

Trigger: A creature enters a square containing the pit.
Attack (No Action): Melee 0 (triggering creature); +6 vs. Reflex
Hit: 1d8 damage, ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends), and the target falls prone.
Miss: As a free action, the target moves into the last square it occupied before it entered the pit's square.
Special: Once triggered, the pit is no longer concealed.

Countermeasures

✦ **Disable:** Thievery DC 9 (standard action). *Success:* The pit's wooden spikes are safely removed.

7. Topiary (Wereboar's Lair)

Combat Encounter Level 5 (XP 1,200)

This is the home of the wereboar Angrad Nénharma and his dire boar companion.

Light: Dim light filters through the canopy.

Monsters: Angrad Nénharma (wereboar), dire boar, owlbear.

Several large, shaggy humanoid and animal forms stand perfectly still about this gloomy chamber, leafy cloaks wrapped tightly around them.

Perception DC 10: *The shapes are actually bushes trimmed into likenesses of animals, monsters, and people. Obviously untended for decades, all these bushes look as if they are wearing cloaks of leaves and branches.*

Allow the characters one round of actions, then continue with the following.

From ahead comes the sound of a creature grunting and moving around, but the source is not yet visible.

Nature DC 10: *The grunting sounds are like those of a large boar—possibly even a dire boar.*

Perception DC 14 (only if someone noticed the used trail in area 6): *The faint trail from the garden leads into this chamber. No attempt has been made to conceal the tracks here.*

A spiral staircase carved into the trunk of a tree at the rear of the chamber leads up to the middle level.

Treasure: With a DC 14 Perception check, a character who searches this chamber finds a treasure cache in a hollow space beneath a flat rock. Wrapped in silk are two gems worth 100 gp each and three statuettes of mythic figures from elven lore worth 250 gp each. One of the statuettes portrays Phayrd; a DC 22 Religion check reveals this fact.

Tactics: If a fight begins here, Nénharma shouts a warning to the characters about the owlbear behind

them. While the characters focus on the owlbear, Nénharma shifts form and attacks. With the characters caught between the wereboar and the dire boar on one side and the owlbear on the other, at least one of the three attackers should be able to focus on the more vulnerable characters who usually avoid melee. When the fight turns against him, Nénharma shifts into boar form and makes a dash for safety in the woods, leaving the owlbear and his animal companion to cover his retreat.

Angrad Nénharma

Nénharma is an elf and a wereboar. He lives alone here because he despises civilized company. The dire boar is his only companion; the two have developed a tight animal-master bond. Nénharma knows nothing about the Colony or the Blood of Gruumsh, and he has no interest in those topics.

When the characters arrive, Nénharma is in elf form, reading or clumsily mending clothes in his lair. He presents himself as a simple hermit, explaining that he stumbled into these ruins while seeking solitude and decided to make his home here. He befriended the dire boar with gifts of food. The creature provides him with just the right amount of company—that is, not much.

Nénharma wears clothing rougher than the typical elf's garb, and he has a vaguely brutish air about him, unlike any other elf the characters have known. His speech is brusque and sometimes crude, and his manners are poor. If the characters ask the same questions repeatedly or are rude, Nénharma shows flashes of ill temper. He controls himself, but not without a brief mental struggle. None of these characteristics are shocking, given Nénharma's antisocial lifestyle, but they are odd in an elf.

Nénharma has done an excellent job of taming the dire boar. It responds to his commands almost like a trained dog.

Angrad Nénharma, Wereboar **Level 6 Brute**
Medium natural humanoid (shapechanger), elf XP 250

HP 76; **Bloodied** 38 **Initiative** +3
AC 17, **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 17 **Perception** +4
Speed 6 (8 in boar form)

Traits

Regeneration
The wereboar regains 5 hit points whenever it starts its turn and has at least 1 hit point. When the wereboar takes damage from a silvered weapon, its regeneration does not function on its next turn.

Bloodied Resilience
While bloodied, the wereboar gains a +2 bonus to all defenses.

Standard Actions

⊕ **Gore** (disease) ✦ **At-Will**
Requirement: The wereboar must be in boar or hybrid form.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +11 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6 + 6 damage, and ongoing 5 damage (save ends) or ongoing 10 damage (save ends) if the wereboar is bloodied. At the end of the encounter, the target makes a saving throw. On a failure, the target contracts wereboar moontusk fever (stage 1).

⊕ **Maul** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Requirement: The wereboar must be in human or hybrid form.
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +11 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8 + 9 damage.

Minor Actions

Change Shape (polymorph) ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: The wereboar alters its physical form to appear as a Medium boar, a unique human, or a hybrid until it uses this power again or until it dies.

Triggered Actions

↯ **Death Strike** ✦ **Encounter**
Trigger: The wereboar drops to 0 hit points.
Effect (No Action): The wereboar uses *gore* or *maul*.

Skills Athletics +13, Endurance +11, Intimidate +8

Str 20 (+8)	**Dex** 10 (+3)	**Wis** 12 (+4)
Con 16 (+6)	**Int** 10 (+3)	**Cha** 11 (+3)

Alignment evil **Languages** Common
Equipment: hide armor, maul

Despite his brutish nature, Nénharma makes every effort to appear friendly and helpful. He offers to share his meager food and shelter, but he doesn't convey any truly useful information about himself or the layout of the ruins. He does, however, make a point of warning the characters that an owlbear lives in the area. He explains that the creature leaves him alone, but it is especially large and dangerous, as should be obvious from its claw marks on the trees.

Once he has found out why the intruders are here and taken their measure in conversation, Nénharma decides whether to attack. If the characters believe his story and seem inclined to leave him alone, then he waits until an opportune time (of your choosing) to ambush them. If the heroes seem eager to fight, then they hear a large creature crashing toward them through the garden. Nénharma shouts a warning that the owlbear must have tracked them here. When the characters turn to deal with the rampaging owlbear, Nénharma shifts form and attacks from behind.

Wereboar Moontusk Fever **Level 6 Disease**
The raging fever burns away resilience and resolve.
Stage 0: The target recovers from the disease.
Stage 1: While affected by stage 1, the target takes a –2 penalty to saving throws while bloodied.
Stage 2: While affected by stage 2, the target can roll only one saving throw at the end of its turn, even if it is subject to multiple effects.
Stage 3: While affected by stage 3, the target must roll twice and use the lower result when rolling a saving throw while bloodied.
Check: At the end of each extended rest, the target makes an Endurance check if it is at stage 1 or 2.
10 or Lower: The stage of the disease increases by 1.
11–14: No change.
15 or Higher: The stage of the disease decreases by 1.

Dire Boar	Level 6 Brute
Large natural beast (mount)	XP 250
HP 85; **Bloodied** 42	**Initiative** +3
AC 17, **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 16	**Perception** +2
Speed 8	
Traits	
Furious Charge	
Whenever a dire boar charges and hits, it deals 5 extra damage, pushes the target 2 squares, and knocks the target prone.	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Gore** ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +11 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d10 + 4 damage, or 2d10 + 9 against a prone target.	
Triggered Actions	
⊕ **Rabid Charger** (mount) ✦ **At-Will**	
Trigger: The dire boar has a friendly rider of 6th level or higher mounted on it, and the rider hits with a charge attack.	
Effect (Free Action): The dire boar uses *gore*.	
Death Strike	
Trigger: The dire boar drops to 0 hit points.	
Effect (No Action): The dire boar uses *gore*.	
Str 19 (+7) **Dex** 10 (+3) **Wis** 9 (+2)	
Con 15 (+5) **Int** 2 (-1) **Cha** 8 (+2)	
Alignment unaligned **Languages** –	

8. Library

Exploration Encounter

The elves of the Colony stored their books in this chamber. A disastrous fire burned most of these volumes to ash during the Colony's destruction.

Arcana DC 14: The residue of powerful protective magic lingers here, but its source is general and nondirectional.

Light: Dim light filters through the canopy.

Broken benches, smashed shelves, and overturned tables of heavy oak lie in shattered heaps across a floor made of tightly twined branches and vines. A handful of water-damaged and bug-eaten books lie atop the debris.

Owlbear	Level 8 Elite Brute
Large fey beast	XP 700
HP 212; **Bloodied** 106	**Initiative** +6
AC 20, **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 20	**Perception** +12
Speed 7	Darkvision
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Claw** ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +12 vs. AC	
Hit: 4d6 + 6 damage.	
⸸ **Double Attack** ✦ **At-Will**	
Effect: The owlbear uses *claw* twice. If both attacks hit the same creature, the owlbear grabs it (escape DC 16) if the owlbear has fewer than two creatures grabbed.	
⸸ **Beak Snap** ✦ **At-Will**	
Effect: Melee 1 (one creature grabbed by the owlbear). The target takes 4d8 + 22 damage.	
Triggered Actions	
⊹ **Stunning Screech** ✦ **Encounter**	
Trigger: The owlbear is first bloodied.	
Attack (Immediate Reaction): Close blast 3 (creatures in the blast); +11 vs. Fortitude	
Hit: The target is stunned (save ends).	
Str 20 (+9) **Dex** 14 (+6) **Wis** 16 (+7)	
Con 16 (+7) **Int** 2 (+0) **Cha** 10 (+4)	
Alignment unaligned **Languages** –	

Nature DC 14: *Less plant life has encroached into this chamber than elsewhere, for no obvious reason.*

The colony mages magically shielded this chamber against the ravages of nature during the years of its use. The wards have weakened in the decades since, letting in insects and water, but they're still potent enough to prevent encroachment by large plants.

Examining the Books: From the remaining books, characters can glean scraps of information about the Colony and the Blood of Gruumsh. A character who studies the books can make a DC 14 History check for every 30 minutes spent on the task. Each character can make up to three checks. Successful checks reveal the following information.

First Success: The residents of the Colony were not all elves. Almost half of them were orcs who dedicated themselves to living a more elven lifestyle, in emulation of Phayrd.

Second Success: A militant elven sect dedicated to Corellon and Kord raised a temple at the edge of the forest. Rangers who brought game to the temple expanded their sway, hunting nearer and nearer to the Colony as time went on.

Third Success: Hunters from the temple discovered the Colony's location. Residents of the Colony feared that trouble would come, but they refused to abandon their homes.

9. Upper Garden

Combat Encounter Level 7 (1,600 XP)

This garden is similar to the Lower Garden (area 6) in most respects. The chief difference is the host of deadly spiders in this area.

Perception DC 14: Dark shapes lurk throughout the webs. Every 2 points by which the roll exceeds 14 increases the number of creatures seen by one, to a maximum of five.

Light: Bright light shines through the canopy.

Monsters: 2 deathjump spiders, 3 spider swarms.

The chamber ahead is a riot of colorful plants, but the mass of webs spun between every available tree trunk and limb mutes their vibrancy.

Nature DC 14: *The surrounding woods have encroached into this chamber as much as all the others, but growing alongside the brush and scrub trees are exotic, aromatic flowers and ornamental vines not native to this forest.*

This encounter happens in two waves. After killing the spiders in this chamber, the characters are likely to take a short rest. While they do—before they gain the benefits of resting—the spiders from area 13 attack. If characters explore the Armory before the Upper Garden, then the situation is reversed; the

2 Deathjump Spiders	Level 4 Skirmisher
Medium natural beast (spider)	XP 175 each
HP 52; **Bloodied** 26	**Initiative** +5
AC 18, **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 15	**Perception** +7
Speed 6, climb 6 (spider climb)	Tremorsense 5
Traits	
Web Walk	
The spider ignores difficult terrain composed of webs.	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Bite** (poison) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d6 + 3 damage, and the target takes ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).	
⸸ **Death from Above** ✦ **Recharge** ⚃ ⚄ ⚅	
Effect: The spider jumps up to 6 squares. This movement does not provoke opportunity attacks. After the jump, the spider uses *bite*, knocking the target prone on a hit.	
Move Actions	
Prodigious Leap ✦ **Encounter**	
Effect: The spider jumps up to 10 squares. This movement does not provoke opportunity attacks.	
Skills Athletics +9, Stealth +8	
Str 14 (+4) **Dex** 12 (+3) **Wis** 10 (+2)	
Con 12 (+3) **Int** 1 (-3) **Cha** 8 (+1)	
Alignment unaligned **Languages** –	

spiders here attack during the characters' short rest in area 13.

Webs: Squares containing spider webs are difficult terrain.

Concealed Doorway: A heavy layer of webbing conceals the doorway connecting this chamber to area 13. The observer cannot see the doorway if more than 1 square of webbing lies in between. The spiders, of course, know exactly where the doorway is.

Tactics: The spiders wait until characters move into the chamber before attacking, if possible. Otherwise, they fight back as soon as the characters attack them. If the heroes haven't already killed them, a second wave of spiders arrives from area 13 while the characters try to rest. Spiders pursue characters into chambers 8, 10, 12, and 14, but no farther.

3 Spider Swarms	Level 3 Soldier
Medium natural beast (spider, swarm)	XP 150 each
HP 44; **Bloodied** 22	**Initiative** +6
AC 19, **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 15	**Perception** +3
Speed 6, climb 6 (spider climb)	Tremorsense 5
Resist half damage from melee and ranged attacks; **Vulnerable** 5 to close and area attacks	
Traits	
☼ **Swarm Attack** ✦ **Aura** 1	
Any enemy that starts its turn in the aura is slowed until the start of its next turn.	
Swarm	
The swarm can occupy the same space as another creature, and an enemy can enter its space, which is difficult terrain. The swarm cannot be pulled, pushed, or slid by melee or ranged attacks. It can squeeze through any opening that is large enough for at least one of the creatures it comprises.	
Web Walk	
The swarm ignores difficult terrain composed of webs.	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Swarm of Fangs** (poison) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 1d6 + 3 damage, and ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).	
Skills Athletics +6, Stealth +9	
Str 11 (+1) **Dex** 17 (+4) **Wis** 14 (+3)	
Con 12 (+2) **Int** 1 (-4) **Cha** 7 (-1)	
Alignment unaligned **Languages** –	

10. Chapel

Exploration Encounter

This chamber served as a ceremonial chapel for the Colony. The members used it chiefly for weddings and funerals.

Light: Bright light shines through a large gap in the canopy.

This chamber is brighter, but far less verdant, than the others. Evidence of a long-ago fire provides a reason for both anomalies. The surrounding trees bear old scorch marks, and the fire-scarred stumps of thick branches ring a gaping hole in the canopy overhead.

Religion DC 14: *The layout of this chamber suggests a religious use, but no traces remain to suggest who or what was worshiped here.*

The attackers destroyed this chamber and its contents utterly. They reduced the carved wooden icons of Phayrd to kindling, heaped it in the center of the chamber, and used it to start a fire and that would burn out all traces of heresy.

Treasure: If the characters explore the room, a DC 21 Perception check uncovers a lump of electrum with assorted gems embedded in it beneath the vines and brush in the center of the room. This piece is all that remains of the gold and silver chapel ornaments that the raiders tossed into the fire. The disk of metal is roughly 2 feet in diameter and 1 inch thick, making it unwieldy unless the characters beat or bend it into a more convenient shape. The metal is worth 650 gp and the gems 400 gp, but the characters can't get that much for it. A goldsmith or jeweler offers 700 gp for the lump, and any other merchant offers only 1d6 × 100 gp.

11. Crypt

Exploration Encounter

The residents of the Colony interred their dead here. Ritual required that they first leave bodies exposed on wooden platforms. When the elements and scavengers had removed all the flesh and entrails, Colony members moved the remains here, building an intricate stack of bones at the center of the chamber. The attackers tossed many more bodies here after the assault. Those corpses lie in tangled heaps where they landed.

Light: Dim light filters through the canopy.

Bones fill every corner of this gloomy chamber. A low pyramid of individual bones and skulls in the center of the room appears to have been built with care, but other skeletons lie haphazardly in tangled heaps.

Characters who inspect the room might learn the following information by making the appropriate skill checks:

Heal DC 14: The bones in the chamber—both those in the pyramid and those scattered on the floor—are a mix of elf and orc remains in almost equal proportions.

Perception DC 14: The bones in the pyramid are pristine, cleaned of all tissue, and unconnected to each other. Those on the floor are complete skeletons, except where scavengers have pulled them apart. Most of the skeletons on the floor show signs of heavy blows or cuts, or have metal arrowheads embedded in them.

Perception DC 21 (DC 10 for an elf, a half-elf, or an eladrin): The arrowheads in the corpses are all of elven manufacture.

The pyramid of bones is approximately 4 feet across at the base and 5 feet high. Players might expect to run into undead here. Nothing in the chamber is dangerous, but don't discourage the players' suspicions.

12. Aviary

Exploration Encounter

The Colony's residents built bird roosts here and lured all manner of wild fowl to nest in them. Years later, the birds continue to reside here. Their cackling and singing can be heard clearly from areas 3, 13, and 14, and distantly from everywhere else.

Lurking among the birds is a pseudodragon that reports the presence of intruders to the dryad in area 15.

Light: Bright light shines through large gaps in the canopy.

Loud squawking, singing, and chirping is audible well before any birds become visible, but when they finally come into view, the sight is breathtaking. Hundreds of birds from dozens of species flit through the air and perch on the tree limbs. Songbirds swoop after insects or peck at bark while crows and jays eye them arrogantly and owls stretch their wings like avian kings. Above, the chamber is open to the sky, and countless more birds wheel and dive in the opening.

Nature DC 14 or Perception DC 21: *Far in the back of the chamber, shaded by trees and obscured by flitting, swooping birds, sits a tiny dragon with reddish-brown scales and a sinewy tail tipped with a stinger. It is watching the events here intently.*

The pseudodragon watches until it's noticed, until the characters move away to another chamber, or until someone takes aim at it. Then it flies to area 15 and alerts the dryad that strangers have come. Any character who notices the pseudodragon and moves to investigate the spot where it was finds a nest where it keeps shiny items that it found in the Colony (see "Treasure").

The birds are an annoyance—player characters must treat every square in the chamber as difficult terrain, and they are effectively deafened while here. Aside from those effects, however, the birds aren't dangerous.

Treasure: In the pseudodragon's cache are 54 gp worth of assorted coins, six items of jewelry worth 400 gp each, a level 9 *earthmother torc*, and a silver-and-gold-chased scroll tube worth 150 gp. The tube contains a scroll with the Leomund's Secret Chest ritual.

Earthmother Torc Level 4+ Uncommon

Stylized acorns, oak leaves, holly berries, and ferns adorn this rope-like silver collar, representing the natural world's serenity.

Lvl 4	+1	840 gp	Lvl 19	+4	105,000 gp
Lvl 9	+2	4,200 gp	Lvl 24	+5	525,000 gp
Lvl 14	+3	21,000 gp	Lvl 29	+6	2,625,000 gp

Neck Slot

Enhancement Bonus: Fortitude, Reflex, and Will

Property

You are immune to diseases transmitted by shapechanger attacks.

Utility Power ✦ Daily (No Action)

Trigger: A shapechanger is hit by your attack.

Effect: The shapechanger cannot regain hit points and cannot use polymorph powers (save ends both).

13. Armory

Combat Encounter Level 7 (1,600 XP)

When the Colony was inhabited, this chamber served as its armory. Much of the arsenal remains hidden beneath the webs of vicious spiders.

The armory is connected to the Upper Garden (area 9).

Perception DC 14: Dark shapes lurk throughout the webs. Every 2 points by which the roll exceeds 14 increases the number seen by one, to a maximum of five.

Light: Bright light shines through the canopy.

Monsters: 2 deathjump spiders, 3 spider swarms (see area 9 for statistics).

A huge assortment of rusted weapons lies in a heap in the middle of the floor. Hanging above them is a great tangle of spiderwebs.

Perception DC 10: *Dozens of birds squawk somewhere nearby, but not in this chamber.*

This encounter happens in two waves. After killing the spiders in this chamber, the characters are likely

to take a short rest. While they do—before they gain the benefits of resting—the spiders from area 9 attack. If characters explore the Upper Garden before the Armory, then the situation is reversed; the spiders here attack during the characters' short rest in area 9.

Webs: Squares containing spiderwebs are difficult terrain.

Concealed Doorway: A heavy layer of webbing conceals the doorway connecting this chamber to area 9. The observer cannot see the doorway if more than 1 square of webbing lies in between. The spiders, of course, know exactly where the doorway is.

Treasure: If the characters spend 10 minutes searching through the debris, they can salvage any twelve simple or military melee weapons of their choosing. The weapons aren't immediately usable, but they will be as good as new after an hour (each) of cleaning, sharpening, and repair.

Tactics: The spiders wait until characters move into the chamber before attacking, if possible. Otherwise, they fight back as soon as the characters attack them. If the heroes haven't already killed them, a second wave of spiders arrives from area 9 while the characters try to rest. Spiders pursue characters into chambers 8, 10, 12, and 14, but no farther.

14. Reflection Room

Exploration Encounter

Phayrd's followers used this room for quiet reflection. It is empty and would be quite peaceful if not for the squawking birds in area 12.

Light: Dim light filters through the canopy.

This chamber has been emptied of everything—even furniture, if it ever contained any. All that remains here now are vines and encroaching brush.

Perception DC 10: *Dozens of birds squawk somewhere nearby, but not in this chamber.*

15. Sacred Topiary

Roleplaying Encounter or Combat Encounter Level 1 (200 XP)

The residents maintained a second topiary in this chamber. Unlike the lower one (area 7), which was purely decorative, this one served a sacred purpose. The shaped plants represented important figures from elven and orc mythology, such as Corellon and Gruumsh, as well as Phayrd and other key individuals in the Colony's heresy.

A dryad recluse now lives among these effigies. She keeps them trimmed and beautiful, and speaks to them on moonless nights.

Arcana DC 15: The plants and the chamber are groomed magically.

Light: Bright light shines through the canopy.

Monsters: Dryad recluse, pseudodragon.

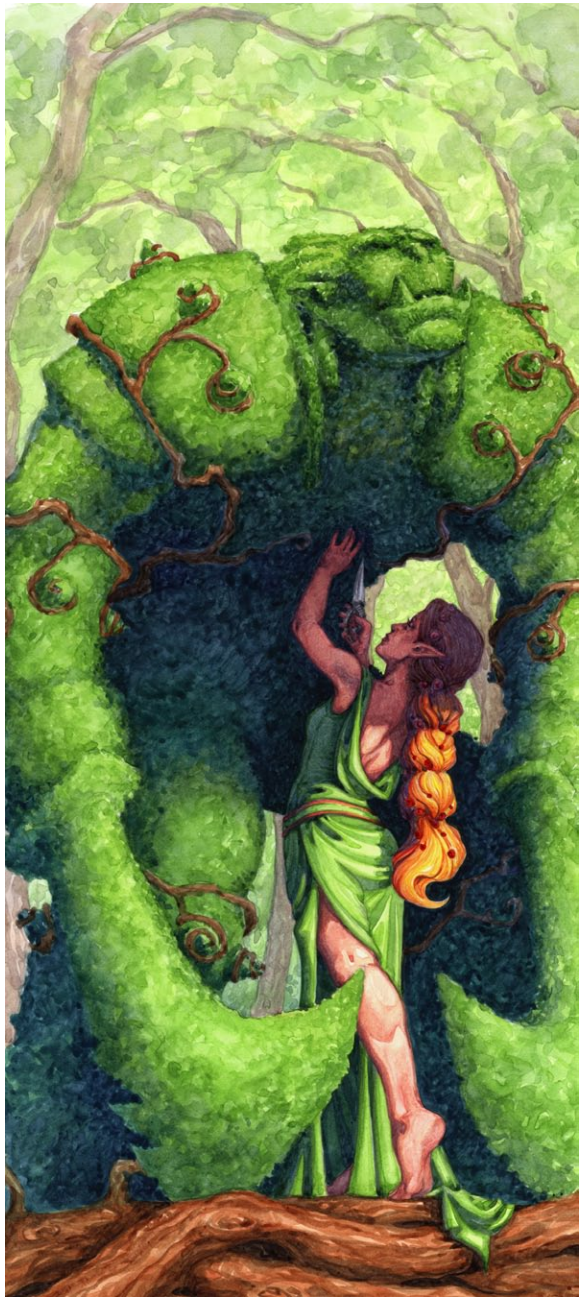
The chamber ahead is a topiary of exquisite beauty. The carvings are almost perfect in their details. In fact, the entire chamber is perfectly maintained. No stray plants creep across the floor, and no climbing vines reach toward the sun. In fact, the room looks as it must have in the Colony's heyday.

A beautiful elf woman steps from behind one of the green monuments. She wears a flowing gown, and delicate blossoms accent her pale orange-gold hair. She seems unaware of anyone's presence as she tends to the greenery.

Perception DC 16: *A tiny dragon with reddish-brown scales peers out from the wall of trees across the chamber.*

Characters can make the following additional skill checks to discern other features of the area.

History or Religion DC 15: The characters can identify the canonical figures from myth—Corellon, Gruumsh, Sehanine, and Lolth, plus a handful of their most prominent disciples. The monuments representing Phayrd at several stages of her life, as well



as her mother and her orc stepfather, are unknown to them, though players might guess their identities.

Perception DC 27: A character sees through the dryad's *deceptive veil* and recognizes her true nature. Players must make a deliberate attempt to pierce an illusion to get this Perception check. It is not automatically allowed.

Any elf, half-elf, or eladrin recognizes the autumnal tones of the elf's hair as an indication of great age.

The dryad's replies to questions are those of an amnesiac. She doesn't recall her name, how long she has been here, why she is alone, or what this place is. All she knows is that these trees are important and it's her task to tend them, no matter what. She does not know who they represent, but she is especially attached to the image of Phayrd.

Most of this response is not a ruse. The dryad lived here while the Colony thrived, and she narrowly survived its destruction by teleporting into the forest. Her grief upon returning to find everyone slaughtered sent her into a psychotic haze from which she will never recover. Characters who use Insight to determine whether the elf is lying can ascertain that she believes everything she says. The only questions she evades are those that would reveal that she isn't really an elf.

The dryad doesn't need to be rescued, and she won't act as a guide through the Colony.

The dryad grows more and more anxious as the conversation goes on. She wants the characters to leave. She repeats that they shouldn't be here, and the others shouldn't be here either. All of them should go and leave her to tend the trees.

"The others" is a reference to the orcs, who have arrived and begun exploring the ground level. The pseudodragon brought her that news, just as it brought word about the characters.

If the conversation goes on for very long, her pleas grow more frantic, verging on mania. If the characters calm her down with Diplomacy or simply leave, all is well. If they press for information the dryad is not willing to give, call up frightful memories, make accusations, or threaten her, she eventually attacks.

If a fight breaks out, much of the action takes place in the forest beyond this chamber. Extend that forest as far as needed in any direction with a blank battle grid.

Forest: Anyone can enter the forest simply by leaving the area that forms the chamber floor. Forest squares are difficult terrain. This topiary is 20 feet above ground level, so characters who step past the chamber's floor must fly, teleport from branch to branch, or climb. The whole forested area is heavily obscured.

Initiative: If the characters seem determined to force this pathetic creature into a fight, then be sure she triggers one. Ask everyone to roll initiative, then place the dryad at the top of the initiative order.

Tactics: The dryad always stands adjacent to a plant so she can use *treestride*. She uses *sylvan charm* on whichever character was the most offensive, or the character she has the best odds against if everyone is being cruel. (She does not target an eladrin or an elf, however.) Then she uses *treestride* to move as far as possible into the forest, dragging the charmed character along. On the next few turns, she double moves with *treestride* until she has outpaced any pursuers, who can't even see her through the foliage.

Once she feels safe, the dryad uses *claw* against her hostage. Because of *sylvan charm*, the character can't fight back and can't run away. A clever player might find a way out of this situation with a magic item, a power, or a desperate, lucky Intimidate check. The other characters hear her captive's screams and pleas for mercy. The dryad believes she is killing one of the Colony's destroyers, so there is no mercy in her. Be sure to drop a few hints about the fate of the Colony into the dryad's enraged shrieks.

When the dryad is satisfied with her revenge, she lets the body of her victim tumble through the branches to the ground, and then she disappears into the gloom.

Her victim hits the ground unconscious and dying, but not dead. The rest of the heroes can reach the body in 3 to 5 rounds if they hurry. Ask for a few Perception checks to locate the body. If someone spends an action point or uses a daily power to get there quicker, reward the player for that act. The timing is your call; make it exciting. Once they find the body, the characters can save their friend's life with Heal and magic.

Your goal in this fight is not to kill a character, but to give the players a good scare—along with a lesson in manners and respect.

The dryad does not stand around to be killed. She retreats in order to stay alive, with or without a victim. If the dryad's first *sylvan charm* attack misses, her best move might be to flee without a hostage. Letting the characters kill her would make the players think that they're in control, when they really should fear this creature.

The pseudodragon takes no part in the fight. At the first opportunity, it simply shakes its head as if to say "You should have known better," then turns invisible and flies away. (If you prefer for the pseudodragon to take an active part in this encounter, a stat block is provided on the next page.)

Further Attacks: The terror doesn't end after one attack. If the characters take an extended rest in or near the Colony to let their injured comrade recover, or if the dryad retreated from the first fight without a victim, she might strike again. It's a simple matter for her to charm someone as the characters rest or while they're distracted and then use *treestride* to get away. Repeat the pattern as often as necessary.

Dryad Recluse	**Level 5 Lurker**
Medium fey humanoid (plant)	XP 200
HP 50; **Bloodied** 25	**Initiative** +10
AC 19, **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 17	**Perception** +10
Speed 8 (forest walk)	

Standard Actions

Claw ✦ At-Will

Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +10 vs. AC

Hit: 2d6 + 6 damage.

Sylvan Charm (charm) **✦ At-Will**

Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +8 vs. Will

Effect: The dryad pulls the target up to 5 squares to a square adjacent to it. The target is charmed until it is no longer adjacent to the dryad or until the dryad uses this power again. A charmed creature is immobilized and can't attack the dryad. When an enemy's melee or ranged attack hits the dryad, it deals half damage to the dryad and half damage to the charmed creature. If the attacker is adjacent to the charmed creature, the charmed creature must make a melee basic attack (of the dryad's choice) against the enemy as a free action.

Move Actions

Treestride (teleportation) **✦ At-Will**

Requirement: The dryad must be adjacent to a tree or a Large plant.

Effect: The dryad teleports up to 8 squares to a square adjacent to a tree or a Large plant. Any creature charmed by the dryad teleports with the dryad to a square adjacent to it.

Minor Actions

Deceptive Veil (illusion) **✦ At-Will**

Effect: The dryad disguises itself to appear as a Medium humanoid (usually a beautiful elf or eladrin) until it uses *deceptive veil* again or until it drops to 0 hit points. Other creatures can make a DC 27 Insight check to discern that the form is an illusion.

Str 12 (+3)	**Dex** 19 (+6)	**Wis** 16 (+5)
Con 14 (+4)	**Int** 12 (+3)	**Cha** 13 (+3)

Alignment unaligned **Languages** Elven

Pseudodragon	**Level 3 Lurker**
Small natural beast (reptile)	XP 150
HP 40; **Bloodied** 20	**Initiative** +9
AC 17, **Fortitude** 14, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 14	**Perception** +8
Speed 4, fly 8 (hover)	

Standard Actions

Bite ✦ At-Will

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC

Hit: 2d4 + 5 damage.

Effect: The pseudodragon flies up to 4 squares. This movement does not provoke opportunity attacks.

Sting (poison) **✦ At-Will**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature that cannot see the pseudodragon); +6 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 2d6 + 5 damage, and ongoing 10 poison damage (save ends).

Invisibility (illusion) **✦ Recharge** when the pseudodragon takes damage

Effect: The pseudodragon becomes invisible until it hits or misses with an attack.

Skills Insight +8, Stealth +10

Str 8 (+0)	**Dex** 18 (+5)	**Wis** 15 (+3)
Con 16 (+4)	**Int** 9 (+0)	**Cha** 17 (+4)

Alignment unaligned **Languages** Common, Draconic

16. Shrine Antechamber

Combat Encounter Level 5 (1,000 XP)

Many of the Colony's residents made their last stand in this chamber defending the shrine, and here they died. Some of them are now wraiths, and they continue defending the shrine indiscriminately against any who approach.

Light: Dim light filters through the canopy.

Monsters: 5 wraiths.

Even the weedy brush growing here does not completely obscure the ancient remains that lie in the center of this chamber. Saplings and ferns grow through rib cages, and vines twine around the remains of arms, legs, armor, and pitted weapons. Scars from long-ago scorching are still visible on surrounding trees.

Heal DC 14: *The remains here are a mix of elves and orcs in almost equal proportion.*

Perception DC 14: *Most of the skeletons show signs of heavy blows or cuts, or have metal arrowheads embedded in them.*

Perception DC 21 (or 10 for an elf, half-elf, or eladrin): *The arrowheads in the corpses are all of elven manufacture.*

If the characters kick their way through the bones, make snide remarks about the corpses, or deliberately search the bodies for loot, the wraiths attack.

Treasure: The attackers looted the dead thoroughly in the initial raid, but they overlooked a single magic implement of level 6 or 7 (of your choosing).

Tactics: The wraiths approach the party quietly and invisibly to avoid notice. Compare their Stealth check result to the characters' passive Perception scores to determine which characters are surprised. One wraith attacks each surprised character with *shadow touch* during the surprise round.

After that, the wraiths use their invisibility, phasing, and *shadow glide* to gang up on one character at a time. They don't necessarily gang up on the same character turn after turn, but they do focus their efforts against just one enemy each turn, as much as possible. The wraiths are supremely patient; they don't make a poor attack on one turn if they could phase invisibly into a better position for a coordinated attack on the next turn. The wraiths fight until destroyed, but they don't leave the Upper Canopy.

More than five wraiths exist in this chamber, but only five fight in the encounter. The others lurk around the edge of the battle where characters can notice them, but for now they are only a threatening presence. If orcs enter this chamber during the final confrontation, more wraiths stand ready to attack them.

5 Wraiths	Level 5 Lurker
Medium shadow humanoid (undead)	XP 200 each
HP 53; **Bloodied** 26	**Initiative** +10
AC 19, **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 15	**Perception** +2
Speed 0, fly 6 (hover); phasing	Darkvision
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic	
Traits	
Insubstantial	
The wraith takes half damage from all attacks, except those that deal force damage. Whenever the wraith takes radiant damage, it loses this trait until the start of its next turn.	
Spawn Wraith	
When the wraith kills a humanoid, that humanoid becomes a wraith figment at the start of this wraith's next turn. The new wraith appears in the space where the humanoid died or in the nearest unoccupied square, and it rolls a new initiative check. The new wraith acts under the Dungeon Master's control.	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Shadow Touch** (necrotic) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 2d6 + 2 necrotic damage, or 4d6 + 14 necrotic damage if the wraith was invisible to the target when it attacked.	
Triggered Actions	
Shadow Glide (teleportation) ✦ **At-Will**	
Trigger: An attack that does not deal force or radiant damage hits the wraith.	
Effect: The wraith becomes invisible until it hits or misses with an attack or until the end of the encounter. The wraith teleports up to 6 squares and cannot attack until the end of its next turn.	
Skills Stealth +11	
Str 4 (-1) **Dex** 18 (+6) **Wis** 10 (+2)	
Con 17 (+5) **Int** 6 (+0) **Cha** 15 (+4)	
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Common	

17. Treasury

Exploration Encounter

The Colony stored its communal wealth here. The attackers hauled most of it away, but they missed some key items.

Light: Bright light shines through a gap in the canopy.

Heavy oak chests lie overturned on the floor, their lids smashed or hacked apart by a sharp implement. A beautiful ceramic urn lies shattered amid the weeds where it was dropped or toppled from a shelf. This room must have been a storehouse for great wealth once, but now the valuables are all gone except for a few scattered, overlooked coins.

Not all the Colony's treasure was kept in plain sight. This chamber has many secret caches in hollow tree limbs, beneath tangled vines, in false bottoms of chests, or camouflaged as mundane items.

Each character who makes a successful DC 21 Perception check while searching the area locates one of the following treasures of your choosing:

Treasure 1: A silver mirror and matching hairbrush worth 300 gp.

Treasure 2: Four gems worth 100 gp each.

Treasure 3: Six gold-and-jewel necklaces worth 100 gp each.

Treasure 4: One magic item of level 7 or 8.

18. Vestry

Exploration Encounter

The Colony's clerics stored vestments and ornaments for Phayrd's Shrine (area 19) here. Scraps and tatters are all that remain. The profusion of new growth conceals the entrance to the shrine.

Light: Bright light shines through the canopy.

This area is small and brightly lit. So much new growth in the form of brush and young trees has spread into the chamber that it's barely recognizable as ever having been a usable area.

Perception DC 10: *Tatters of silk and cotton vestments lie strewn around the chamber, largely concealed beneath the profusion of brush and saplings growing in the sunlight.*

Perception DC 21, Dungeoneering DC 14, or Nature DC 10: *A downward staircase circles a tree near the back of the chamber, but overgrowth blocks access to it. Cutting a hole big enough to climb through will take several minutes.*

19. Shrine

Exploration Encounter

The Colony's shrine to Phayrd was once green and beautiful. Now it's a burned and blasted sepulcher for the former high cleric, whose body conceals an important clue.

Light: Dim light filters through the canopy.

Trap: The elves who demolished the Colony left behind a *glyph of warding* in case anyone who escaped into the forest ever came back here. Located in the square at the base of the stairs, the glyph detonates when the *second* character in the group steps off the stairs onto that square. The burst is large enough to encompass everyone on the stairs.

Glyph of Warding	Level 7 Trap
Object	XP 300
Detect Perception DC 27 or Arcana DC 23	**Initiative** –
Immune attacks	
Triggered Actions	
⊕ **Attack** (fire) ✦ **Encounter**	
Trigger: The square containing the glyph is stepped on by the second character to descend the staircase.	
Attack (Immediate Reaction): Close burst 3 centered on the glyph (creatures in the burst); +10 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 3d6 + 4 fire damage, and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).	
Countermeasures	
✦ **Disable:** Thievery DC 23 (standard action). *Failure (18 or lower):* The glyph is triggered.	

When the characters reach this chamber, read:
The smell of burning lingers in this chamber, even after so many intervening decades. All the surfaces of the room are deeply scarred by fire and lightning.

Lashed to a scorched bench that leans against the wall is a badly decayed body.

Healing DC 14 or Perception DC 21: *A wink of light glints from something in the corpse's stomach area.*

Further investigation reveals that the glinting item is a brass key. Characters can learn the following information by making the appropriate skill checks.

Arcana DC 14 (to detect magic): The key has a faint magical aura. It provides a link to a chest that was hidden with the Leomund's Secret Chest ritual.

Heal DC 10: The body is that of a female elf. At least one assailant tortured her severely, then stabbed her to death.

The body is that of the highest-ranking cleric of Phayrd in the Colony. The attacking elves captured her, lashed her to the bench, and tried to make her reveal the location of any hidden treasures or relics of Phayrd, which they suspected must exist. She refused to tell them anything and died with her secret safe—namely that she had swallowed the key to the hidden reliquary.

Key: The object in the cleric's stomach is a delicate brass key with a head carved from a finger bone (a true relic of Phayrd). The carving resembles an elf's face on one side and an orc's face on the other. Whoever holds the key has the personal link necessary to summon the Colony's reliquary, a chest that was hidden using the Leomund's Secret Chest ritual. (A scroll containing this ritual lies in the pseudodragon's nest in the Aviary. Move the scroll to some other location if your players aren't inclined to search a pseudodragon's nest.)

With the key, a scroll containing the ritual, 140 gp worth of arcane components, and 5 minutes, anyone can summon the chest to his or her current location. A character who has mastered the level 6 ritual does not need the scroll.

Phayrd's Reliquary: The reliquary is a locked iron chest. The key opens the lock, or it can be picked with a DC 23 Thievery check. The inside of the chest is 20 inches from side to side, 16 inches from front to back, and 12 inches deep.

Treasure: The reliquary contains four items that reputedly belonged to Phayrd—the First Truth from the *Book of Five Truths*, a *crown of leaves*, and two more magic items of level 5 to 8 that you choose. The chest also contains the Scriptures of Phayrd, which relate in detail the legend of Phayrd as her followers understood it. The scriptures end with a final note indicating that the priestess believed that warriors from the nearby temple of Corellon and Kord would soon attack the Colony, and that she doubted her community was strong enough to win such a battle. The reliquary is valuable as a safe storage place, provided that characters have access to the Leomund's Secret Chest ritual.

Crown of Leaves Level 7 Common

The fey energy imbued into this delicate crown unveils nature and its secrets to your sight and touch.

Head Slot 2,600 gp

Property

Gain a +2 item bonus to Nature checks and Insight checks.

Book of Five Truths (First) Level 8 Common

Scribes recorded five truths on scrolls at the start of the Dawn War and then scattered them throughout the planes. Each scroll grants its reader insight into the nature of being.

Legendary Boon 3,400 gp

Property

The First Truth: Gain a +2 item bonus to Insight checks and Perception checks.

Showdown

The climax of the adventure occurs when the characters have explored most of the Colony, learned what secrets they can, and then come upon Venak's war band.

Venak is an orc storm shaman (level 6 controller). Though he is not the strongest orc in this war party, he commands it because of the mission's unique nature and the superstitious fears that all orcs share. Some of the more powerful warriors resent his authority, though, and they're willing to follow Venak as long his orders steer them toward victory. If the characters deliver a few setbacks, the orcs might begin feuding among themselves in ways that the characters can exploit.

Venak does not have a fixed number of orcs under his control—many small bands are currently prowling through this forest. Therefore, reinforcements can come and go as you wish. The woods are so thick that characters should never have a clear idea of how many orcs they're facing. They hear orc voices grunting somewhere nearby, catch the sounds of rattling weapons and armor, and occasionally glimpse a moving shadow. It should be clear that they're facing a superior force, but the closest estimate of enemy strength they can make is "a lot."

The final confrontation can develop in dozens of different ways. You should have at least three strong battles out of the orcs. For example, you could open with a surprise encounter against an exploring party, let the characters beat back an assault, and finish with a desperate breakout. Alternatively, you could begin with scouts, move to an abortive attempt to break out that Venak's reinforcements prevent, allow some characters to set traps while others negotiate with Venak, and then let the orcs dash themselves to pieces in a running battle through the heroes' gauntlet.

How this encounter plays out depends largely on the players. Let them make their own plans without trying to steer them onto any predetermined

course, but do not let them break out too soon. If they make an immediate dash for freedom, bring a steady stream of orc reinforcements into the fight to turn the heroes back. Make it clear that they must weaken the orcs a bit before a direct rush can succeed.

A few orc scouts (archers and savages) arrive shortly after the characters have dealt with Angrad Nénharma. Events should build from there, with more orcs arriving while the characters explore. The exact staging and pacing are up to you.

Simultaneous Exploration: Several routes up and down through the Colony exist. If the characters move slowly, the orcs could get ahead of them. Both groups might be startled when they bump into each other.

Typical advance squad: 2 orc savages, 2 orc archers, 1 orc rampager (level 2 encounter, 688 XP).

Flag of Truce: Venak wants to know what the characters learned in the Colony. He can't afford to kill them until he knows whether they destroyed or concealed vital evidence. To find out, he might offer to negotiate under a white flag. This situation gives both sides a chance to gauge the opposition, rest, regroup, or maneuver for position. Venak doesn't intend to let the characters escape no matter how negotiations turn out, but there's no telling what might happen when enemies sit down to talk. (That's what Phayrd would have said, anyway.)

Breakout: Venak can summon reinforcements, surround the Colony, and wait for the characters to get hungry and thirsty. Characters might try to fight their way through such a cordon before overwhelming reinforcements arrive.

Typical cordon squad: 2 orc savages, 2 orc archers, 1 orc rampager; an additional 1 orc storm shaman and 1 orc pummeler arrive on turn 3 (level 5 encounter,

Ogre Mercenary **Level 8 Soldier**
Large natural humanoid (giant) XP 350

HP 93; **Bloodied** 46 **Initiative** +8
AC 24, **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 19 **Perception** +6
Speed 8

Standard Actions

Morningstar (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +13 vs. AC
Hit: 2d8 + 7 damage.
Effect: The ogre marks the target until the end of the ogre's next turn.

Handaxe (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +13 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8 + 7 damage.

Brutal Sweep (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Close blast 2 (creatures in the blast); +13 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8 + 7 damage, and the target falls prone.

Str 22 (+10) **Dex** 15 (+6) **Wis** 15 (+6)
Con 21 (+9) **Int** 7 (+2) **Cha** 8 (+3)

Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Giant
Equipment morningstar, 2 handaxes

Orc Rampager **Level 6 Brute**
Medium natural humanoid XP 250

HP 90; **Bloodied** 45 **Initiative** +5
AC 18, **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 16 **Perception** +3
Speed 6 Low-light vision

Traits

Berserk Flailing
While the orc is bloodied and can take opportunity actions, any enemy that starts its turn adjacent to the orc takes 5 damage.

Standard Actions

Heavy Flail (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +11 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6 + 6 damage.

Rampage ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: The orc shifts up to 3 squares and can use *heavy flail* against three enemies during the shift.

Handaxe (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +11 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6 + 6 damage, and the orc can push the target 1 square.

Triggered Actions

Savage Demise ✦ **Encounter**
Trigger: The orc drops to 0 hit points.
Effect (Free Action): The orc takes a standard action.

Str 21 (+8) **Dex** 14 (+5) **Wis** 10 (+3)
Con 20 (+8) **Int** 8 (+2) **Cha** 8 (+2)

Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Common, Giant
Equipment leather armor, heavy flail, 4 handaxes

Orc Archer **Level 4 Artillery**
Medium natural humanoid XP 175

HP 42; **Bloodied** 21 **Initiative** +6
AC 16, **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 14 **Perception** +2
Speed 6 Low-light vision

Standard Actions

Handaxe (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC
Hit: 1d6 + 6 damage.

Longbow (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 30 (one creature); +11 vs. AC
Hit: 1d10 + 6 damage, and the orc can push the target 1 square.

Clustered Volley (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Area burst 1 within 20 (creatures in the burst); +9 vs. AC
Hit: 1d10 + 6 damage.

Triggered Actions

Savage Demise ✦ **Encounter**
Trigger: The orc drops to 0 hit points.
Effect (Free Action): The orc takes a standard action.

Str 15 (+4) **Dex** 18 (+6) **Wis** 10 (+2)
Con 12 (+3) **Int** 8 (+1) **Cha** 9 (+1)

Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Common, Giant
Equipment leather armor, handaxe, longbow, 30 arrows

Orc Savage **Level 4 Minion Brute**
Medium natural humanoid XP 44

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion. **Initiative** +3
AC 16, **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 12 **Perception** +1
Speed 6 Low-light vision

Standard Actions

Handaxe (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC
Hit: 8 damage, or 12 with a charge attack.

Handaxe (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +9 vs. AC
Hit: 6 damage.

Triggered Actions

Savage Demise ✦ **Encounter**
Trigger: The orc drops to 0 hit points.
Effect (Free Action): The orc takes a standard action.

Str 16 (+5) **Dex** 13 (+3) **Wis** 9 (+1)
Con 13 (+3) **Int** 8 (+1) **Cha** 8 (+1)

Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Common, Giant
Equipment hide armor, 4 handaxes

1,188 XP). Use a stronger force if your goal is to drive the characters back into the Colony.

Assault: If Venak is impatient or feels confident in his strength, he can order an immediate assault against the Colony. The orcs aren't limited to arriving through chambers. They can climb into the trees and attack upper levels from any direction, but such an attack is poorly coordinated.

Typical assault squad: 2 orc savages, 2 orc archers, 1 orc rampager, 1 orc storm shaman, 1 ogre mercenary (level 6 encounter, 1,288 XP).

Running Battle: A climactic battle can shift from chamber to chamber as the orcs come through walls to push back or outflank characters, or as the heroes seek stronger defensive positions. In a running battle, the orc force should seem overwhelming (as indeed it might be). By keeping on the move, characters can force a powerful enemy force to string out, to pile up at choke points, and to make long, time-wasting detours toward the characters' flanks, only to find their foes gone when the flanking force arrives. This tactic is especially effective as long as the orcs don't know the Colony's layout—the orcs don't run or make double moves through unknown areas for fear of losing their bearings in the eerie surroundings.

Typical running battle squad: 2 orc savages, 2 orc archers, 1 orc rampager, 2 orc storm shamans (including Venak), 1 orc pummeler, 1 ogre mercenary (level 8 encounter, 1,788 XP).

Traps and Ambushes: With time to prepare, characters could set traps and then lure orcs into them during a running battle.

Allies: If the characters befriended the dryad or at least left her in peace, they can eliminate a few orcs by luring them to the Sacred Topiary, where the dryad willingly takes care of the problem. The spiders in areas 9 and 13 can become ersatz allies, if the heroes didn't kill them all and the orcs don't know about them. Finally, the characters might lure orcs into the shadowy arms of the wraiths in area 16.

Orc Storm Shaman **Level 6 Artillery**
Medium natural humanoid XP 250

HP 54; **Bloodied** 27 **Initiative** +7
AC 20, **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 18 **Perception** +6
Speed 6 Low-light vision

Standard Actions

Scimitar (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +11 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8 + 6 damage.

Lightning Strike (lightning) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Ranged 30 (one creature); +11 vs. Reflex
Hit: 1d10 + 8 lightning damage, and one enemy within 5 squares of the target takes 5 lightning damage.

Vengeful Whirlwind (lightning, thunder, zone) ✦ **Recharge** when first bloodied
Attack: Area burst 1 within 10 (enemies in the burst); +11 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2d10 + 4 lightning and thunder damage, and the target falls prone. Then the shaman slides the target up to 2 squares.
Miss: Half damage, and the shaman can slide the target 1 square.
Effect: The burst creates a zone that lasts until the end of the orc's next turn. Any enemy that ends its turn in the zone takes 10 thunder and lightning damage.

Triggered Actions

Wind Walk ✦ **Encounter**
Trigger: The shaman is first bloodied.
Effect (Free Action): Until the end of the encounter, the shaman gains a fly speed of 8 but must land or fall at the end of each move.

Savage Demise ✦ **Encounter**
Trigger: The orc drops to 0 hit points.
Effect (Free Action): The orc takes a standard action.

Str 16 (+6) **Dex** 19 (+7) **Wis** 16 (+6)
Con 12 (+4) **Int** 8 (+2) **Cha** 9 (+2)

Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Common, Giant
Equipment hide armor, scimitar

Orc Pummeler **Level 6 Controller**
Medium natural humanoid XP 250

HP 76; **Bloodied** 38 **Initiative** +5
AC 20, **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 16 **Perception** +3
Speed 6 Low-light vision

Standard Actions

Stone Maul (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +11 vs. AC
Hit: 2d6 + 7 damage, and the target falls prone.

Earthshaking Slam ✦ **Encounter**
Attack: Close burst 2 (creatures in the burst); +9 vs. Fortitude
Hit: 3d6 + 5 damage, and the target is dazed until the end of the orc's next turn.
Effect: The orc pushes each target up to 2 squares.

Triggered Actions

Intercepting Swat ✦ **Recharge** ⚅ ⚄ ⚃
Trigger: An enemy makes an opportunity attack against the orc.
Effect (Free Action): The orc uses *stone maul* against the triggering enemy.

Savage Demise ✦ **Encounter**
Trigger: The orc drops to 0 hit points.
Effect (Free Action): The orc takes a standard action.

Str 21 (+8) **Dex** 14 (+5) **Wis** 10 (+3)
Con 20 (+8) **Int** 8 (+2) **Cha** 8 (+2)

Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Common, Giant
Equipment scale armor, stone maul

About the Author

Steve Winter went to work for TSR, Inc. in 1981, and he has made a living from D&D ever since. Among his many roles are editor, designer, creative director, novel author, web producer, and community manager. Currently he is a D&D producer in Seattle. You can read Steve's reflections and speculations on D&D, RPGs, and game design at www.howlingtower.com, or follow him 140 characters at a time on Twitter as @StvWinter.

Siege of Gardmore Abbey

A D&D® adventure for 6th-level characters

By Steve Townshend

Illustrated by Ralph Horsley, Tony Foti, Jason Juta, Jim Nelson, Sam Carr, and Chris Seaman

Cartography by Jason A. Engle

"Siege of Gardmore Abbey" was originally run in 2011 at the PAX convention in Seattle. The adventure chronicles the fall of Gardmore Abbey and serves as a prequel to the *Madness at Gardmore Abbey*™ adventure.

The players assume the roles of adventurers vital to the defense of the abbey. Each player uses one of six pregenerated characters, available as a separate download, who have direct connections to the setting and to one another. (The adventure is designed for a party of five characters, so one of the pregenerated characters might remain unused.) The players should become familiar with their characters' backgrounds and goals. The motivations of the characters help direct their choices as the story unfolds.

The tactical maps are built using the *Dungeon Tiles Master Set: The City*, so you should have those tiles on hand when running the adventure.

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Background

Read or paraphrase the following material for the players before you begin:

It is the golden age of Nerath. From the ancient empire of Bael Turath to Arkhosia to the frontier lands of the Nentir Vale, the mighty empire unites the world in a dream of peace and prosperity. The roads are safe, the people free, and the threats to civilization pushed beyond the borders of the map.

In the Nentir Vale, the strongest bastion of Nerath's might is Gardmore Abbey, whose valorous knights have recently returned from the Dragondown Coast, having defeated the terrible hobgoblin warlord Hur-Tharak. This quest won them a legendary artifact of chaos—the Deck of Many Things—that they now safeguard in the vaults beneath the abbey.

With peace prevailing throughout the land and the Deck of Many Things safely in the hands of good, the knights of Gardmore prepare to retire two of their number: Sir Nordan Gram, an exiled knight of Nerath at the end of his sentence, and Sir Oryn Thain, an elderly champion long past his prime.

FOUR PLAYERS?

This adventure can be run with four characters instead of five, but the adventure text does not provide guidelines for doing so. As a rule, drop the lowest-level creature in each encounter if you run the adventure for four characters, and in the final encounter, give the dragon a -2 penalty to attack rolls and damage rolls. Also, it's recommended that you not include Harak as a character option when running the adventure for four players, and include Tamlin and Glynneth only if both can be present.

Synopsis

As the knights of the abbey prepare for a grand retirement ceremony, a mysterious new leader known as Nightbringer rises among the orcs of the Stonemarch. Orcs have long posed no significant threat to the abbey, but the new chieftain now marshals the largest horde to march on the Nentir Vale in over a century.

"Siege of Gardmore Abbey" begins as the orc horde starts to gather outside the abbey. Since the adventurers are either soon to retire or are not formally affiliated with the knights, the Knight Captain assigns them to the reserves. Their duties are intended to keep them out of harm's way: bolstering the defenses, gathering intelligence, and protecting the nobles and emissaries within Gardmore's keep.

As the adventurers work on these tasks, the siege begins in earnest. For three weeks, challenges arise that threaten the safety of the abbey. On the fourth week of the siege, Nightbringer manages to overcome enough of Gardmore's defenders to break through an outer wall, allowing his platoon to infiltrate the abbey. All seems lost.

Enter the adventurers, fresh from the reserves, to engage the orc chieftain's force. With the charismatic Nightbringer defeated, the orcs fall into disarray and the tide of battle turns.

But the victory comes too late. When the Knight Captain receives word that the orcs have entered the abbey, he puts aside his faith in Bahamut and casts his lot with Fate. He draws from the *Deck of Many Things*, revealing the Skull card.

Violence erupts throughout the abbey as undead attack from within, along with demons attracted by the chaos thus unleashed. But hope comes with word of ancient vaults beneath Gardmore that offer a chance of escape. If the adventurers survive a fiery gantlet of demons and undead, they can save themselves and Gardmore's people.

Just as the adventurers reach the building that leads to the vaults, a young red dragon seizes its opportunity to plunder. It has been lurking above the clouds throughout the siege and now lands squarely between the party and Gardmore's fleeing citizens. The adventurers can escape into the vaults with their lives . . . or they can fight one last time for the glory of Gardmore and Nerath.

Preparing the Adventure

Before running this adventure, you should become familiar with the backgrounds and goals of the pregenerated characters and understand how their motivations affect the plot. This section includes a synopsis of the characters' goals and possible ways for the players to attain them, for easy reference.

"Siege of Gardmore Abbey" is an event-based adventure that tells two stories: the fall of Gardmore Abbey and the fate of the heroes who are present at its demise. The fall of the abbey is a predetermined event that the players experience through their characters. Their choices affect the difficulty of the encounters and influence the adventure's outcome.

The most meaningful choices in the adventure deal with the interaction between the players' characters and others at the abbey. Each adventurer is connected to at least two others, and each has a goal to accomplish. Encounter 1 not only sets up the siege to come but also serves as a way for the players to become familiar with the setting and get to know the nonplayer characters. As well, you should allow plenty of time for roleplaying during skill challenges and short rests, and try to accommodate the player characters' needs when they interact with other individuals.

It's possible that an adventurer will die before the final encounter. To guard against this possibility, an additional knight of Gardmore character has

been provided so the player can remain in the game. This character enters play with a new name, half the normal healing surges, and no daily powers.

Finally, bear in mind that this adventure takes place before the fall of Nerath. In an echo of the coming doom, the season is late autumn, just before winter. Call attention to this fact as you narrate the adventure, painting an epic tale of glory and heroism at the end of an age. Overdo it—use purple prose and over-the-top imagery. The adventurers are the flame of Gardmore and Nerath, the last light of an era that is extinguished with the fall of Gardmore's valiant knights. Soon after Gardmore Abbey falls, so too will the Empire of Nerath. Monsters will invade civilized lands, the town of Fallcrest will be sacked, and the civilized world will fall into near-endless darkness.

Character Goals

Each adventurer has a personal goal that affects the character's attitude toward other characters and choices in combat. These goals affect the outcome of the characters' stories. Each adventurer who achieves a goal earns a special reward at the adventure's conclusion.

Sir Nordan Gram: Sworn to protect the people of Nerath, Sir Nordan succeeds if the party gathers the refugees in encounter 4 and bloodies or slays the dragon in encounter 5.

Sir Oryn Thain: The aged knight wishes only to die gloriously in battle protecting his allies. He achieves his goal if, during the course of the adventure, he never willingly receives healing (he might still receive healing while unconscious).

Sir Tamlin the Black: Determined to protect all his allies, he achieves his goal if at the end of the adventure none of the starting adventurers have been slain.

Harak: A half-blood torn between two worlds, Harak must choose one or the other. In encounter 3, he is forced to decide whether his loyalties lie with the humans or the orcs. If he sides with the adventurers, he must slay six orcs, or bloody or kill Nightbringer. If he turns against the characters, he must bloody or kill one adventurer.

Savvra: The tiefling is painfully aware of the wages of hubris, and she wants to make the proud people of Nerath recognize this trait in themselves. She must persuade three Gardmore figures to admit the knights' pride or folly. Doing this resembles a skill challenge, using History, Diplomacy, or Intimidate to achieve 3 successes before 3 failures. The following list gives the encounters involving influential Gardmore figures and the difficulty of persuading them. (The proud Knight Captain is certain of his righteousness early in the siege, but toward the end of the battle the other defenders are more easily persuaded.)

Encounter 1: Havarr (DC 28).

Encounter 2: Elaida (DC 23), Hrom (DC 23), Zandrian (DC 23).

Encounter 3: Zandrian (DC 15).

Encounter 3 Aftermath: Hrom (DC 15), Vandomar (DC 11).

At your discretion, you can award Savvra 1 or more successes for exceptional roleplaying,

Glynneth: This female eladrin is Tamlin's mother. Glynneth is intent on telling him this fact but cannot freely do so because she is bound by an enchantment. This enchantment, however, can be circumvented: Whenever Glynneth slays a creature that has dealt damage to Tamlin, she earns one word toward being able to tell him the truth. At the adventure's conclusion, she can tell Tamlin the truth or provide a hint, using no more words than she has earned—even a single word might suffice.

If Tamlin guesses who Glynneth is, Glynneth achieves her goal. If she tries to tell him the truth before then, whether or not she has earned any words, she fails; furthermore, whenever Tamlin is damaged, Glynneth takes 5 psychic damage.

If Sir Tamlin is not in the party: Glynneth achieves her goal if she survives the adventure without dropping to 0 hit points.

Common Features of the Area

Illumination: Unless otherwise noted, all illumination in this adventure is bright light.

Buildings: Most buildings other than the keep average 15 feet in height and require a DC 15 Athletics check to climb.

Walls: The outer walls and the keep are 30 feet high. The citadel's interior walls are 20 feet high. All are dressed stone, requiring a DC 23 Athletics check to climb.

Encounter 1: The Knight Captain

Roleplaying Encounter

This encounter sets up three challenges the adventurers will face in encounter 2 as the siege progresses. The adventurers have the opportunity to interact with the Knight Captain and the other characters in the group, as well as learn of the three primary Gardmore figures they will deal with. (Players who are familiar with *Madness at Gardmore Abbey* might recognize these characters and their ultimate fates.)

The party has been summoned to the battlements of Gardmore's keep by Havarr of Nenlast, a tall human with silver hair, a long, hard face, and a red mustache. As Knight Captain of the abbey, Havarr is responsible for securing Nerath's northern frontier against invasion; as long as Gardmore Abbey stands, no force can attack through the Nentir Vale.

Knight Captain Havarr of Nenlast gazes from the battlements out over the curtain wall. As the late autumn sun

sets, an army of savage orcs surrounds Gardmore Abbey. Their campfires flicker across the Gardbury Downs, like a river of flames flowing from the Stonemarch.

"Still not enough of a threat to test the power of our prize," he says. "Nevertheless, these brutes should keep our skills sharp for the spring tournament, eh?"

Streetwise or **History DC 15:** The "prize" Havarr refers to is a powerful artifact that the knights recently brought back from a campaign along the Dragondown Coast, against the hobgoblin warlord Hur-Tharak of the Infernal Bastion. If the adventurers ask Havarr about the artifact, he winks and nods but does not reveal the nature of it. A character who succeeds on a DC 23 Streetwise check or History check knows that the artifact is known as the *Deck of Many Things*.

Insight DC 15: Havarr's excitement is evident when he mentions the artifact. He does not seem concerned about the encroaching orc army.

Havarr greets each of the adventurers by name and acknowledges their accomplishments and service to the abbey. The Knight Captain is respectful toward the characters, regardless of how they greet him, but he is especially friendly toward the titled members of the party (Sir Nordan, Sir Oryn, and Sir Tamlin). Give the players some time to respond to Havarr's greeting and to introduce their characters to each other. Havarr might make observations about each character as you see fit to help immerse the players.

After this initial greeting, or if the adventurers ask why they have been summoned, the Knight Captain explains his purpose.

Havarr smiles. "I called each of you here to spare you some hardship. As you know, Gardmore has little to fear from orcs; year after year they pour out of the Stonemarch to break themselves against our walls. This force, though larger than most, is no exception. Even so, those of you who are soon to retire from service or not formally enlisted in our fellowship ought not to put yourselves at risk unnecessarily. Therefore I have decided that each of you shall remain within the safety of the keep as a reserve force to protect Gardmore's civilians, emissaries, and nobles until the siege breaks or the imperial detachment arrives from southern Nerath.

"Do not think your part in this battle any less valiant! Though you are free from obligation, any assistance you lend to the defenders or the good folk dependent upon our protection will be most welcome."

Havarr tries to be reasonable with anyone who questions his decision, but he pulls rank if necessary. He offers a choice of tasks to those who wish to help. These tasks have various effects during the coming siege (encounter 2).

1. Bolster the abbey's defenses (Sir Elaida).
2. Gather intelligence (Sir Hrom).
3. Command the civilians (Sir Zandrian Velfarren).

Ask each player which task his or her character will perform, and make note of their choices for use in encounter 2. Each task is supervised by one of the abbey's knights (noted above). An adventurer can choose not to perform any tasks, although this choice might have harmful repercussions when the siege begins.

When the conversation reaches its conclusion, a messenger approaches Havarr, who dismisses the adventurers and strides off to attend to other duties.

Encounter 2: The Siege

Modified Skill Challenge Level 5 (1,250 XP)

This challenge resembles a skill challenge in several parts and includes roleplaying elements. The adventurers' success or failure affects the progress of the siege as well as future encounters in the adventure.

In the first part of the encounter, the adventurers can help prepare for the onslaught of the orc army by aiding one of the three knights, as directed in encounter 1. These activities take place at roughly the same time.

The second part of the encounter covers the three weeks of the siege that precede the assault on Gardmore. During this time, the besieging army's actions can be influenced by the adventurers' performance at a given task.

The adventurers' choices also affect the progress of the attack once the orcs break into the abbey, and they will be called upon to make further skill checks to control the panicked population.

To begin, ask each player which task his or her character is undertaking (if any) in part 1. Once all have chosen, handle the various tasks one by one. Each task includes some read-aloud text; keep in mind which adventurers are approaching the knight in charge and use the appropriate response for the knight's attitude toward them. Give the players the opportunity to engage in roleplaying with the knights before making their skill checks.

The Three Knights

The adventurers' chances of success or failure in the next encounter are influenced by two factors.

- Success or failure on skill checks associated with a task.
- The attitude of the knight in charge toward the characters performing a task.

The information on their character sheets should help the players figure out which duty best suits their skills. Determining the knights' attitudes, however, depends on both observing their behavior and deducing likely assumptions about each character's background. Before they choose their assignments, describe each knight to the players, but keep their attitudes—favorable or unfavorable—a secret.

The Knights' Attitudes

Although the supervising knights accept aid from any quarter, each has prejudices that predispose him or her favorably or unfavorably toward certain characters. Whether a knight's attitude is favorable or unfavorable affects the difficulty of the task that knight oversees.

Favorable: The character gains a +2 bonus to skill checks related to this task.

Unfavorable: The DCs of skill checks related to this task are increased by 2.

If a knight is not specially disposed toward a character, there is no effect on the related skill checks.

Any character can attempt one DC 15 Insight check to determine a knight's attitude toward that character and the reasons for it.

Any character can attempt one DC 23 Diplomacy check to change a knight's attitude from unfavorable to favorable. You can also adjust any knight's attitude in either direction based on roleplaying.

A character who discerns that a knight has an unfavorable attitude toward him or her can choose a task associated with a different knight.

Sir Elaida

Havarr instructs those who volunteer to help bolster Gardmore's defenses to report to Sir Elaida at the gatehouse.

Sir Elaida is a female human cavalier with striking features, including long chestnut-brown hair. She is forthright and brave, and she shares a fast bond of fellowship with the knights. She is betrothed to Vandomar, Gardmore's wizard and a meticulous perfectionist.

Elaida loves Vandomar, who is many years older than she, and thinks him wise—but he is the only wizard she trusts. Vandomar wants Elaida to leave the knights' service so that she can remain close to him and far from danger, but she refuses to abandon her calling. The wizard has therefore protected her with magical wards and convinced the Knight Captain to assign her safer duties.

Favorable, Sir Nordan and Sir Oryn: Elaida respects these heroes of Gardmore for their selfless devotion.

Unfavorable, Savvra and Glynneth: Although Savvra is her lover's apprentice, Elaida refers to her as "devilkin." Likewise, she wholly distrusts "that eladrin witch."

Sir Hrom

Sir Hrom directs intelligence gathering from a table at the Dragon's Head Inn outside the garrison.

Sir Hrom is a good-humored human with prematurely white hair and beard. He has friends everywhere in the abbey, from Bahamut's templars high atop Dragon's Roost to the street sweepers in the village. Belying his jovial nature, he is conservative in his attitudes and takes the highest pride in his knighthood.

Hrom is one of four knights (the others are Engram, Dorn, and Silas) who are responsible for the care of a holy vessel called the Brazier of Silver Fire. According to legend, the Silver Fire has the power to banish demons. It must be kept within a special housing, for if its light is extinguished, only a powerful ritual can reignite it.

Favorable, Sir Oryn and Sir Tamlin: Sir Hrom has the utmost respect for the aged hero of Gardmore and thoroughly approves of the way he has instructed his adopted son, Tamlin, in the ways of knighthood.

Unfavorable, Sir Nordan and Harak: He is disappointed in Sir Nordan's decision to leave Gardmore after serving his term of exile. Harak he disdains for his orc blood—the pollution of the enemy.

Sir Zandrian Velfarren

Adventurers who want to help command the abbey's civilians should speak with this eladrin knight. He does not inhabit the village proper but has established a camp in the gardens by the Font of Ioun, a magical pool with restorative qualities.

Tall, with silver eyes and hair, Sir Zandrian is aloof, honest, proud, and direct. He is not in the service of Gardmore, but is an emissary from the Autumn City of Mithrendain in the Feywild. He is also Glynneth's brother.

Zandrian came to the Nentir Vale to maintain good relations with the humans of the region. His ancestors cemented an alliance with gifts of enchanting Feywild flora, which have since thrived in Gardmore's gardens, and he has brought additional specimens. He is the most esteemed among the nobles, emissaries, and civilians dwelling at Gardmore. Zandrian pities nonmagical creatures such as humans, and he especially shuns the civilians of

Gardmore. He spends his time meditating in the gardens "to escape their human prattle."

Favorable, Glynneth and Savvra: Zandrian is affectionate and protective toward his sister, and he respects the innate magic of Vandomar's apprentice.

Unfavorable, Sir Oryn and Sir Tamlin: The eladrin dislikes the aged cavalier for his stubborn pride, and Sir Tamlin for encouraging it. He also does not approve of Sir Tamlin's adoption of a foul half-orc, although he is coolly polite to Harak.

Part 1: Preparing for Battle

Any number of characters can participate in a single task, but each can choose just one. One character makes a check to see how well the group handles the task. Any others assigned to the same task can choose to aid this check.

A knight's attitude toward an individual adventurer affects the whole group, if several characters choose to take on that task. If a group includes characters both favorably and unfavorably regarded, treat the knight as having no opinion one way or the other.

Bolster the Defenses

This task requires the adventurers to help Sir Elaida prepare the keep and the gatehouse against the orc army. The work is backbreaking, as the laborers reinforce the walls with stone, lime, and mortar.

Sir Elaida stands next to a pile of quarried stone where a number of masons work. She consults a diagram of the abbey walls as two of Vandomar's dragon-headed gargoyles hoist blocks of stone up to the battlements. As you approach, Elaida wipes the sweat from her brow with the back of her sleeve and speaks.

Favorable: *"Here come some likely candidates for fortifying these proud walls."*

Unfavorable: *"Now I see how seriously the Knight Captain takes the task of strengthening our defenses. Oh, well, we need whatever help we can get."*

If the adventurers converse with her, Elaida expresses a desire to go into battle with the other knights—but her betrothed, Vandomar, has stationed her inside the keep for her own protection until the wedding. A DC 15 Arcana check reveals that Elaida is protected by magical wards.

Athletics or Endurance DC 15: Elaida shows the volunteers the weak points in the walls and puts them to work bolstering the fortifications. Players can also try to use other skills, such as Dungeoneering, but using one of these skills raises the DC to 23.

The adventurers' success or failure affects the progress of the siege (see "The Surge," on the next page).

Success: The adventurers reinforce Gardmore's defenses and have a better chance of keeping the walls intact during the siege.

Failure: The adventurers do their best, but slow work and preliminary fire by the besieging force leaves a few obvious gaps that the orcs can exploit.

Gather Intelligence

Hrom needs information to discern a clear picture of the orcs' strategy, especially that of their mysterious new leader, known only as Nightbringer.

Sir Hrom sits at a stout oak table outside the Dragon's Head Inn, a foaming flagon in one hand and a quill in the other. He passes messages to knights and peasants alike, sending them forth on errands. As you approach he looks up, his face flushed, and grins.

Favorable: *"Word gets out I have a few friends, and Havarr puts me in charge of intelligence. Still, can't complain about the office!"*

Unfavorable: *Hrom's smile fades. "Well, you're not really a knight of Gardmore, are you? Ah, never mind. There's work for every kind of person. You want to help, get over here."*

The adventurers can help the ebullient knight by observing the enemy force and listening for rumors in different parts of the abbey.

Perception or Streetwise DC 15: Hrom sets the volunteers to work observing the orcs' movements and gathering useful information from residents of the Abbey. He seeks detailed information about Nightbringer's activities. Players can also try to use other skills, such as Stealth or History, but using one of these skills raises the DC to 23.

The adventurers' success or failure affects the progress of the siege (see "Nightbringer's New Plan," on the next page).

Success: The adventurers begin to notice subtle patterns in the orc troops' disposition. These observations help predict Nightbringer's changing strategies during the siege.

Failure: Rumors allege that Nightbringer is the son of a demon and an orc, possessing unnatural powers. The adventurers otherwise learn little of substance. Not only are the rumors false, but the defenders fail to anticipate a surprising maneuver later in the siege.

Command the Civilians

Sir Zandrian needs assistance to command the nobles and sway the leaders among the common people. Although he understands their "simple minds," as a foreign dignitary he has little influence over them.

Sir Zandrian Velfarren sits by the Font of Ioun, sheltered by whispering boughs of oak trees casting off the last fiery leaves of autumn.

Favorable: *As you approach, the graceful eladrin rises. "Greetings, esteemed arcanists," he says with a bow.*

Unfavorable: *The eladrin looks in the other direction. "What could one such as you hope to find here?" he says without emotion.*

If the adventurers converse with him about the nobility, Zandrian explains that the civilian leaders are stubborn and privileged, and they consider the orcs' arrival a personal inconvenience. When comfortable, they expect noble etiquette and respond to flattery. When frightened, they can be cowed.

Diplomacy or History DC 15: With Zandrian's advice, the adventurers can impress the keep's civilian leaders, by treating them courteously or recalling famous deeds of their houses. Players can also try to use other skills, such as Insight, but using one of these skills raises the DC to 23.

The adventurers' success or failure affects the progress of the siege (see "The Nobles' Revolt," below).

Success: The adventurers' eloquence earns them the civilian leaders' respect and trust. They are in a good position to command the population in trying times.

Failure: The adventurers underestimate the political undercurrents within the keep. They will have a hard time convincing the leaders to listen to them.

Part 2: The Siege

The siege progresses over several weeks. During the siege, the characters' actions from part 1 will be put to the test. Their success or failure has significant consequences in the following combat encounters.

Read the descriptions of the following weeks to the players and then call for the required skill checks when prompted.

The Surge

The first days of the siege begins with an artillery barrage, testing the reinforcement of the walls.

As the autumn skies turn gray and colorless, the siege begins in earnest. Hill giants and ogres wearing heavy layers of crude plate mail hurl colossal boulders at the abbey walls.

If the adventurers succeeded at "Bolster the Defenses," read:
Your work under Sir Elaida's direction helps Gardmore's mighty walls hold. Even so, if the orcs can get a stone loose, they might create an opening.

If the adventurers failed at "Bolster the Defenses," read:
The orcs' hurled boulders shear off battlements and open jagged cracks in the stone. After a few days, the Gardmore knights dare not walk upon the gatehouse walls. Unless the walls are somehow mended, the orcs will break in.

Group Check (Athletics or Endurance): The DC is 15 if the adventurers succeeded in bolstering the defenses in part 1. If they failed, the DC is instead 23. If at least half of the group succeeds on the check, it is a success. Otherwise, it is a failure.

Success: Though heavily damaged, the walls hold against all but the heaviest attacks. (Fewer orcs break through to begin encounter 3.)

Failure: The relentless attack damages Gardmore's walls in too many places to repair. Soon the walls will fail. (More orcs attack at the start of encounter 3.)

Nightbringer's New Plan

During the next phase of the siege, Nightbringer tries a strategy of launching attacks at specific places.

As the siege wears on, Nightbringer's army hurls itself against the abbey's walls—now in one place, now another, executing uncanny tactical maneuvers. The valiant Gardmore knights slay the savages by the hundreds, yet the army clings to the abbey's walls as flame licks dry wood.

If the adventurers succeeded at "Gather Intelligence," read:
As you observe the orcs' movements, you begin to notice a pattern: Wherever Nightbringer's banner appears, the attackers are reinvigorated. Observing that banner lets you predict where and how hard the army will strike next.

If the adventurers failed at "Gather Intelligence," read:
The unpredictable, seemingly random attacks are devastatingly effective. Pierced by black arrows, knights drop from the walls like the last leaves of autumn.

Group Check (Perception, Nature, or Streetwise): The DC is 15 if the adventurers succeeded in gathering intelligence in part 1. If they failed, the DC is instead 23. If at least half of the group succeeds on the check, it is a success. Otherwise, it is a failure.

Success: The adventurers can track where and when Nightbringer will strike. They recognize that defeating the orc leader will break the army's morale. (Doing so immediately ends the attack in encounter 3.)

Failure: Nightbringer's strategy is inscrutable. (The attacking orcs gain surprise at the start of encounter 3.)

The Nobles' Revolt

As the siege drags on, the population begins to panic and become difficult to control.

Far more knights have fallen than expected, and the mood inside the abbey is tense and grim. Worse, a red serpentine shape has been spotted darting above the clouds in an aura of crimson fire. Only the eladrin Sir Zandrian remains calm.

If the adventurers succeeded at "Command the Civilians," read:
Working through the rapport you established with the civilian leaders, you support the voices of reason and decry the troublemakers. You win over the majority of the population and help to keep the peace.

If the adventurers failed at "Command the Civilians," read:
The pressure of the siege has turned these once diplomatic and reasonable folk into an unruly mob. The leaders demand that their people be released from the keep to take shelter on higher ground in the temple of Bahamut.

Group Check (Diplomacy or Intimidate): The DC is 15 if the adventurers succeeded in commanding the civilians in part 1. If they failed, the DC is instead 23. If at least half of the group succeeds on the check, it is a success. Otherwise, it is a failure.

Success: The adventurers stand strong, quelling the rebellion and maintaining control of the nobles and their people. Their bravery and influence will keep the civilians calm in times of panic. (They can keep the refugees out of harm's way in encounter 4.)

Failure: Half the civilian leaders push their way out of the keep to seek shelter on higher ground, along with their people. If tragedy strikes, these willful folk could be lost. (The adventurers cannot protect all the refugees in encounter 4, and some fall victim to attackers.)

Encounter 3: Nightbringer

Tactical Encounter Level 6

Nightbringer leads an attack that breaks through the abbey's outer wall, and his followers stream through.

Setup

Nightbringer, orc chieftain (N)
4 orc savage mobs* (M)
4 orc savages (S)

*The number of these monsters at the start of the encounter depends on the adventurers' performance during encounter 2 (see below for details). If the party contains six characters, add one more orc savage mob.

At the start of round 2 and each round thereafter:
If Nightbringer is alive and no orc savage mobs are in play, add one new mob in the Monster Start Area.

Encounter Variables

The difficulty of this encounter depends on the adventurers' choices and their success at certain tasks.

Bolstering Defenses: If the adventurers succeeded on their group skill check during the Surge, remove one orc savage mob from the start of the encounter.

Gathering Intelligence: If the adventurers discerned Nightbringer's strategy in Encounter 2, they know that the war leader is the key to the orcs' power. Once he is slain, the encounter ends immediately. If they failed to see through Nightbringer's strategy, the orcs have a surprise round at the start of the battle as the adventurers scramble to respond.

Harak's Dilemma: The half-orc scout Harak is conflicted about where he belongs. He once idolized the knights, but most of them treat him with contempt for his orc blood. If Harak is a member of the party, Nightbringer appeals to his orc heritage. See "Harak's Choice," on the next page.

When the players have placed their characters, read:
The siege has entered its fourth week. Black storm clouds obscure the sun, and in the gloom, the orcs launch a three-pronged surge. An overwhelming force of orcs and ogres hammers at the gatehouse, drawing every available knight to its defense. Meanwhile, a separate group drives at a damaged section of wall near the keep, while a third force assaults the watchtower on the other side of the abbey.

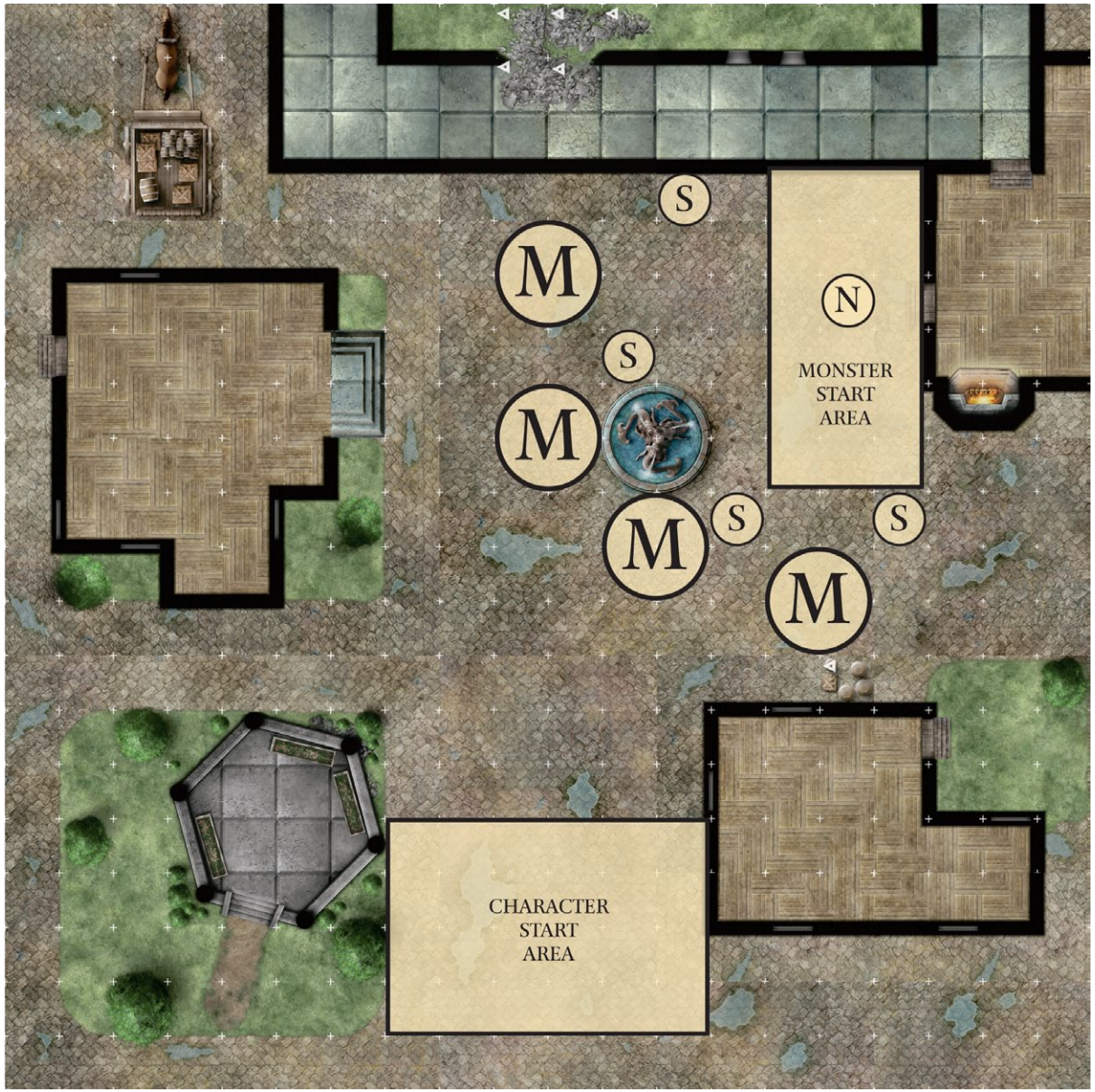
Inside the keep, the eladrin knight Zandrian stands and draws his blade. "Orders be damned. We will fight on our feet, not die in our chairs," he declares.

"The orcs have breached the walls!" a voice cries from within. "Alert the Knight Captain!" shouts another. "All is lost!" cries a third.

Zandrian urges the adventurers to help Elaida stop the surge of orcs breaking through the walls near the keep (the hexagonal building on the tactical map) while he aids in the battle at the watchtower. After wishing them luck, he vanishes from sight.

When the adventurers exit the keep, read:
Mobs of roaring orcs push through a guard station attached to Gardmore's outer walls. Sir Elaida stands alone before them, raising her sword in a defiant salute. As her blade flashes silver in the dim light, orcs fall around her, while her love's powerful enchantments render her invulnerable to their crude blades.

Then a mighty javelin as thick as a young tree streaks out from the horde. Feathered in black like a diving raven, it pierces Elaida's magically warded armor, and the knight crumples before a massive orc half again as tall as the



others. Nightbringer strides into Gardmore, gloating on the threshold of victory.

Harak's Choice

In the heat of battle, Harak must choose whether to remain with the defenders of Gardmore or join his kin against the rest of the party.

When the first orc savage mob is destroyed, or when Nightbringer is first bloodied, read:
Nightbringer cries out in a great voice, "Blood of our blood, why do you fight with humans that hate you? Join us, and your descendants shall have power and honor among our kind forever! By the eye of Gruumsh, I swear it!"

Tell Harak's player to choose one of the following three possible courses of action for the character. These courses of action relate to Harak's goals.

- **Join the Orcs:** Harak joins the orcs, and the other characters become his enemies. At the end of the encounter, if the adventurers survive and Harak is slain, the player can continue to play the adventure as a loyal Gardmore knight. The player uses the Gardmore knight character sheet provided with the adventure for the remainder of the adventure.
- **Defend the Abbey:** Harak continues to fight alongside the player characters, resisting Nightbringer's temptation.
- **Flee:** Harak chooses neither option and flees the battlefield.

If the player chooses the first or second option, Harak's character goal is achieved.

Nightbringer, Orc Chief (N) **Level 6 Elite Soldier (Leader)**
Medium natural humanoid XP 500

HP 146; **Bloodied** 73 **Initiative** +7
AC 22, **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 18 **Perception** +4
Speed 6 (8 when charging) Low-light vision
Saving Throws +2; **Action Points** 1

Standard Actions

Spear (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creatures); +11 vs. AC
Hit: 1d8 + 10 damage, or 2d8 + 10 with a charge attack.

Double Attack ✦ **At-Will**
Effect: Nightbringer uses *spear* twice.

Black Javelin (weapon) ✦ **Recharge** ⚅ ⚄ ⚃
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +11 vs. AC. This attack doesn't provoke opportunity attacks.
Hit: 4d6 + 8 damage, and the target is immobilized and takes ongoing 5 damage (save ends both).

Chaos Hammer (force) ✦ **Encounter**
Attack: Area burst 1 within 10 (enemies in the burst); +9 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d6 + 6 force damage, and the target falls prone.
Miss: Half damage, and the target falls prone.

Minor Actions

Eye of Wrath (fear) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Close burst 5 (one creature in the burst); +9 vs. Will
Hit: The target takes a -4 penalty to AC (save ends).

Triggered Actions

Fury of Gruumsh ✦ **Encounter**
Trigger: Nightbringer is first bloodied.
Effect (Free Action): Close burst 5 (orc allies in the burst); the target makes a melee basic attack as a free action.

Savage Demise
Trigger: Nightbringer drops to 0 hit points.
Effect (Free Action): Nightbringer takes a standard action.

Skills Endurance +11, Intimidate +12, Religion +9

Str 18 (+7)	**Dex** 15 (+5)	**Wis** 13 (+4)
Con 17 (+6)	**Int** 12 (+4)	**Cha** 18 (+7)

Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Common, Giant
Equipment leather armor, fur cloak, spear, 3 javelins

Orc Savage Mobs (M) **Level 6 Brute**
Large natural humanoid (swarm) XP 250 each

HP 83; **Bloodied** 41 **Initiative** +4
AC 18, **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 16 **Perception** +2
Speed 6 Low-light vision
Resist 5 against melee and ranged attacks; **Vulnerable** 5 to close and area attacks

Traits

Swarm Attack (weapon) ✦ **Aura 1**
Any enemy that starts its turn in the aura takes 5 damage. If this damage bloodies the enemy, it is slowed until the end of the mob's next turn.

Swarm
The mob can occupy the same space as another creature, and an enemy can enter its space, which is difficult terrain. The mob cannot be pulled, pushed, or slid by melee or ranged attacks. It can squeeze through any opening that is large enough for one of the creatures it comprises.

Standard Actions

Wave of Handaxes (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +11 vs. AC
Hit: 3d6 + 3 damage.

Triggered Actions

Dwindling Numbers ✦ **Encounter**
Trigger: The mob is first bloodied.
Effect (No Action): The mob is destroyed, and four orc savages appear in its former space. The savages act on the mob's initiative count.

Str 16 (+6)	**Dex** 13 (+4)	**Wis** 9 (+2)
Con 13 (+4)	**Int** 8 (+2)	**Cha** 8 (+2)

Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Common, Giant

Tactics

Nightbringer prefers to attack from range at the start, then uses *chaos hammer* and spends an action point to charge those who are prone. He directs *eye of wrath* each round against a heavily armored enemy. He does not take unnecessary risks, and once he is bloodied he aids his allies from range.

The mobs coordinate to deal maximum damage to enemies. When the swarms separate into orc savage minions, they charge whenever they can do so without provoking an opportunity attack.

Orc Savages (S)	Level 4 Minion Brute
Medium natural humanoid	XP 44 each
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	**Initiative** +3
AC 16, **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 14, **Will** 12	**Perception** +1
Speed 6	Low-light vision
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Handaxe** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC	
Hit: 8 damage, or 12 with a charge attack.	
⊹ **Handaxe** (weapon) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +9 vs. AC	
Hit: 6 damage.	
Triggered Actions	
Savage Demise	
Trigger: The orc drops to 0 hit points.	
Effect (Free Action): The orc takes a standard action.	
Str 16 (+5) **Dex** 13 (+3)	**Wis** 9 (+1)
Con 13 (+3) **Int** 8 (+1)	**Cha** 8 (+1)
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Common, Giant	
Equipment hide armor, 4 handaxes	

Features of the Area

Buildings: The roofs of the buildings are 3 squares above the ground, and climbing the walls requires a DC 15 Athletics check. Any creature can enter a building through a doorway. The doors are open.

Cart and Horse: The horse has blinders on and is oblivious to the fighting. Moving into the cart requires 1 extra square of movement. It provides partial cover.

Fountain: A white marble rendering of Sir Oryn Thain in his younger days stands in the center of this fountain. The fountain is difficult terrain and provides partial cover.

Shrubs: These squares are difficult terrain.

Aftermath

The orc invasion has been repelled, unknown to Havarr as he makes his desperate choice.

The adventurers can take a short rest. As they catch their breath, they take stock of the abbey's losses and witness a moment of tragedy.

Read:

Victory at last.

The mighty Nightbringer has fallen, and his hold over the orc army begins to disintegrate. The leaderless orcs fall into disarray, and the tide of battle quickly turns as the knights force the enemy back from Gardmore's walls. As ogres and giants crash to the ground, the knights hail you as heroes for defeating Nightbringer and breaking the siege.

But the day has not been won without a heavy toll. Beside a heap of slain orcs, the corpse of Sir Elaida is still propped up by the orc chieftain's black javelin. Her once-bright eyes stare unseeing at the walls she fought to secure.

Then Vandomar materializes from the chaos of battle, haggard and bloody, flanked by two gargoyles and Sir Hrom. Catching sight of his beloved's lifeless body, the wizard runs to her side and collapses as he embraces her.

"What good is all my magic if it cannot preserve beauty and perfection?" Vandomar says, looking to you as if for an answer. "Damn Bahamut if he will not protect his faithful!"

As the gargoyles shelter Vandomar with their wings, he vows to use all the magic at his disposal to bring Elaida back again. Sir Hrom soberly urges the adventurers to return to the fight and eliminate the remaining orcs. Allow the players a moment to interact with Vandomar and Sir Hrom.

When the adventurers are ready to rejoin the fight, read:

You charge once more into the enemy ranks, a shining blade to drive back the darkness. Your success is unknown to Knight Captain Havarr of Nenlast, though. Like the wizard Vandomar, he has forsaken Bahamut and trusted his fate to the cards—to the doom of all.

From high atop Dragon's Roost comes a wail like the ghost of a murdered soul, and orcs and knights together turn their faces to the skies. The clouds above coalesce into the shape of a horned demonic skull that hovers over Gardmore Abbey. Behind it, the reddening sun sets the cloudy skull ablaze, its fanged mouth brimming with fire. Four hands of misty darkness manifest and clutch the top of Bahamut's temple before the colossal horror launches itself down upon Gardmore's grounds, trailing a long stream of fire in its wake. Instead of smoke, shadowy wraiths emerge from the flames, eyes burning with unholy hate. Wherever the nightmare skull moves, skeletal demons fire leap forth.

At the demons' touch the orcs burst into flame, and the Gardmore knights raise a tentative cheer, for it appears that Havarr has sent a great weapon against their enemies. But the horrors do not stop there—their fires also consume the knights and villagers of the abbey.

Encounter 4: The Gauntlet of Fire

Tactical Encounter Level 8

Setup

2 lesser fire demons (D)
3+ blazing skeletons (S)

If six characters are in the party, add one more blazing skeleton to the encounter.

The encounter begins in the aftermath of encounter 3. The adventurers must gather Gardmore's panicked survivors and lead them to the Heroes' Gate, beyond which they can take shelter in the abbey's vaults.

Read:

The fortress burns around you as hideous demons and undead feast on the burning souls of Gardmore Abbey.

"Take everyone you can and make for the Heroes' Gate!" Sir Hrom shouts above the din. "In the barracks on Dragon's Roost is a hidden passage leading to the vaults. It's their only chance for survival! My brothers and I shall unleash the Silver Fire and cast away these demons. Now go! The people of Gardmore haven't a chance without you!"

Sir Hrom elbows past the gargoyles that shelter the grieving Vandomar. "Wizard, get to the garrison and tell my brothers I am coming."

The crestfallen wizard barely seems to hear him as he looks again at his fallen love. "I'll bring you back. I swear it," he says. "I'll fix everything." He nods, and the gargoyles bear Vandomar and the body of Elaida away.

Gathering the Refugees

The people of Gardmore follow their leaders. Successfully organizing the retreat to Dragon's Roost requires that the nobles be willing to listen to instructions.

Diplomacy or Intimidate: DC 23, or DC 15 if the adventurers succeeded in quelling the nobles' rebellion in encounter 2. Encourage the player making the check to say or describe the speech to the civilian leaders.

Success: Although terrified, the refugees follow the adventurers through the blazing streets. The heroes are bolstered by their success, and each starts the next encounter with 5 temporary hit points.

Failure: The adventurers are unable to reason with the fearful leaders. Several villagers flee in panic, but fire demons block their path and set them ablaze. Add two blazing skeletons to the encounter, each adjacent to one of the starting positions on the map.

Fleeing the Abbey

After the adventurers attempt to gather the refugees, they lead the remaining survivors through the village. For this encounter, assume the villagers are off the map, a short distance behind the adventurers, who must clear the way for the villagers.

Have the players place their characters in the Start Area on the map.

Read:

You push through Gardmore Village amid the tumult of warfare. Around you, skeletal demons wreathed in fire alight on roofs, setting buildings ablaze and transforming living creatures into grotesque, shambling pyres.

As you make your way up the slope leading to Dragon's Roost, the hot, smoky air thickens and the ground starts to tremble. The Heroes' Gate lies just ahead, but two fiery demons block your path. They cackle maniacally as you approach. Behind them, a few burning bodies rise up, preparing to hurl flames at you.

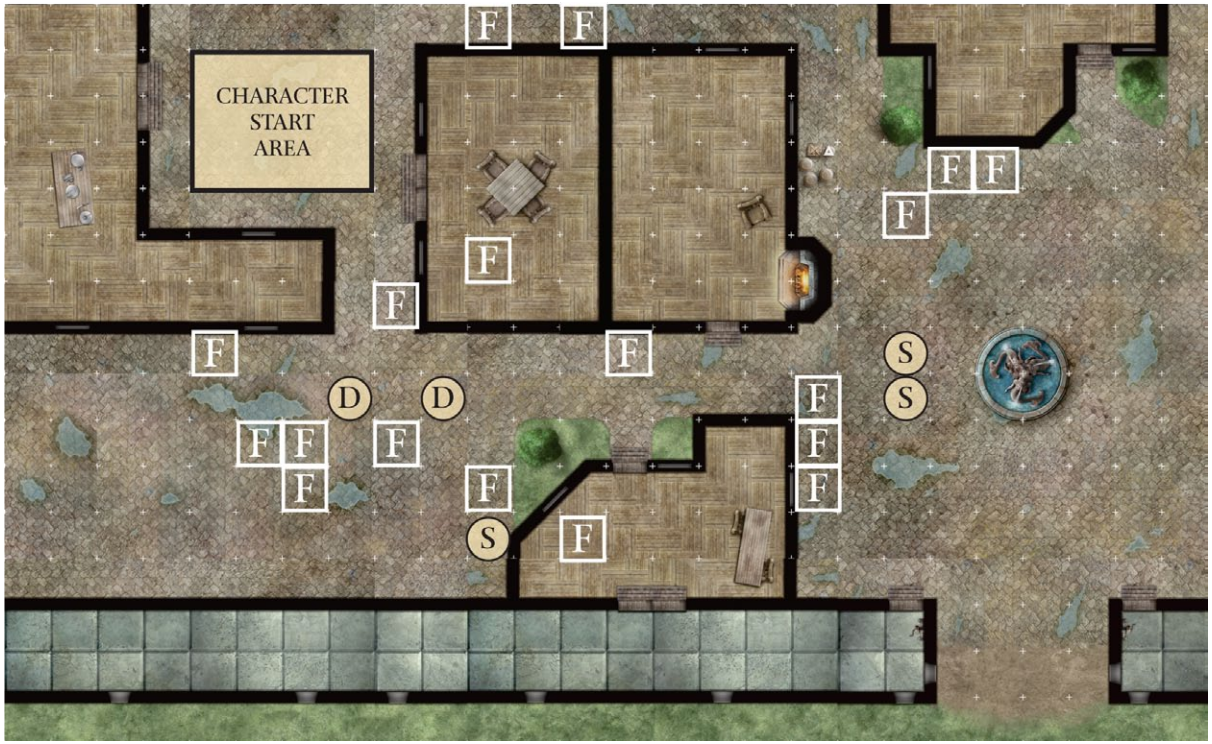
Tactics

The lesser fire demons move around the battlefield with *drawn to fire* and attack with *leaping flame* as much as possible.

The blazing skeletons use *flame orb* whenever possible, but they do not risk opportunity attacks to move out of melee.

Features of the Area

Burning Buildings: The roofs of the buildings are on fire, filling the rooms with hot, choking smoke. Squares inside the buildings are heavily obscured. Creatures can enter the buildings without harm,



but any character who starts his or her turn inside a building must succeed on a DC 15 Endurance check or lose a healing surge.

Fires (F): Burning debris is scattered throughout the area, and some larger fires are effective barricades. Each square of fire is 2 squares tall. Any creature that enters a square of fire or ends its turn in one takes 10 fire damage.

As a move action, a creature adjacent to the fire can extinguish one square of flames.

Furniture: Pieces of furniture within the buildings are difficult terrain.

2 Lesser Fire Demons (D)	**Level 8 Skirmisher**
Medium elemental humanoid (demon, fire)	XP 350 each
HP 88; **Bloodied** 44	**Initiative** +11
AC 21, **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 19	**Perception** +6
Speed 8, fly 10	
Resist 15 fire; **Vulnerable** 5 cold	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Fiery Touch** (fire) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 3d6 + 5 fire damage.	
↟ **Leaping Flame** (fire) ✦ **At-Will**	
Effect: The demon shifts 5 squares and can make the following attack once during the shift.	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +13 vs. Reflex	
Hit: Ongoing 15 fire damage (save ends).	
Move Actions	
Drawn to Fire (teleportation) ✦ **At-Will**	
Effect: The demon teleports 10 squares to a square adjacent to a fire that fills at least 1 square, or adjacent to an enemy that is taking ongoing fire damage.	
Triggered Actions	
Flickering Flame ✦ **At-Will**	
Trigger: An attack misses the demon.	
Effect (Opportunity Action): The demon shifts 1 square.	
Str 13 (+5) **Dex** 21 (+9) **Wis** 15 (+6)	
Con 16 (+7) **Int** 8 (+3) **Cha** 12 (+5)	
Alignment chaotic evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common	

3+ Blazing Skeletons (S)	**Level 5 Artillery**
Medium natural animate (undead)	XP 200 each
AC 19, **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 16	**Perception** +4
Speed 6	Darkvision
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 fire, 10 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 5 radiant	
Traits	
☼ **Fiery Aura** (fire) ✦ **Aura** 1	
Any creature that ends its turn in the aura takes 5 fire damage.	
Standard Actions	
⊕ **Blazing Claw** (fire) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d6 + 3 damage, and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).	
⊕ **Flame Orb** (fire) ✦ **At-Will**	
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +10 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 2d4 + 4 fire damage, and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).	
Str 13 (+3) **Dex** 18 (+6) **Wis** 15 (+4)	
Con 17 (+5) **Int** 4 (-1) **Cha** 6 (+0)	
Alignment unaligned **Languages** –	

Development

As the adventurers battle the demons, the *Deck of Many Things* attempts to move on, its purpose served. Its departure is unexpectedly thwarted by the knights' binding wards. This conflict triggers an explosion in the vaults beneath Dragon's Roost. Cards scatter throughout the abbey, causing chaos.

This explosion occurs at the start of the third round of combat. Creatures that are not flying must succeed on a DC 15 Acrobatics check or fall prone.

If the characters attempt to enter the watchtower, perhaps in search of Zandrian, they find that the stone has begun to writhe like a serpent. No entrance can be seen.

Encounter 5: The Legacy of Gardmore Abbey

Tactical Encounter Level 7

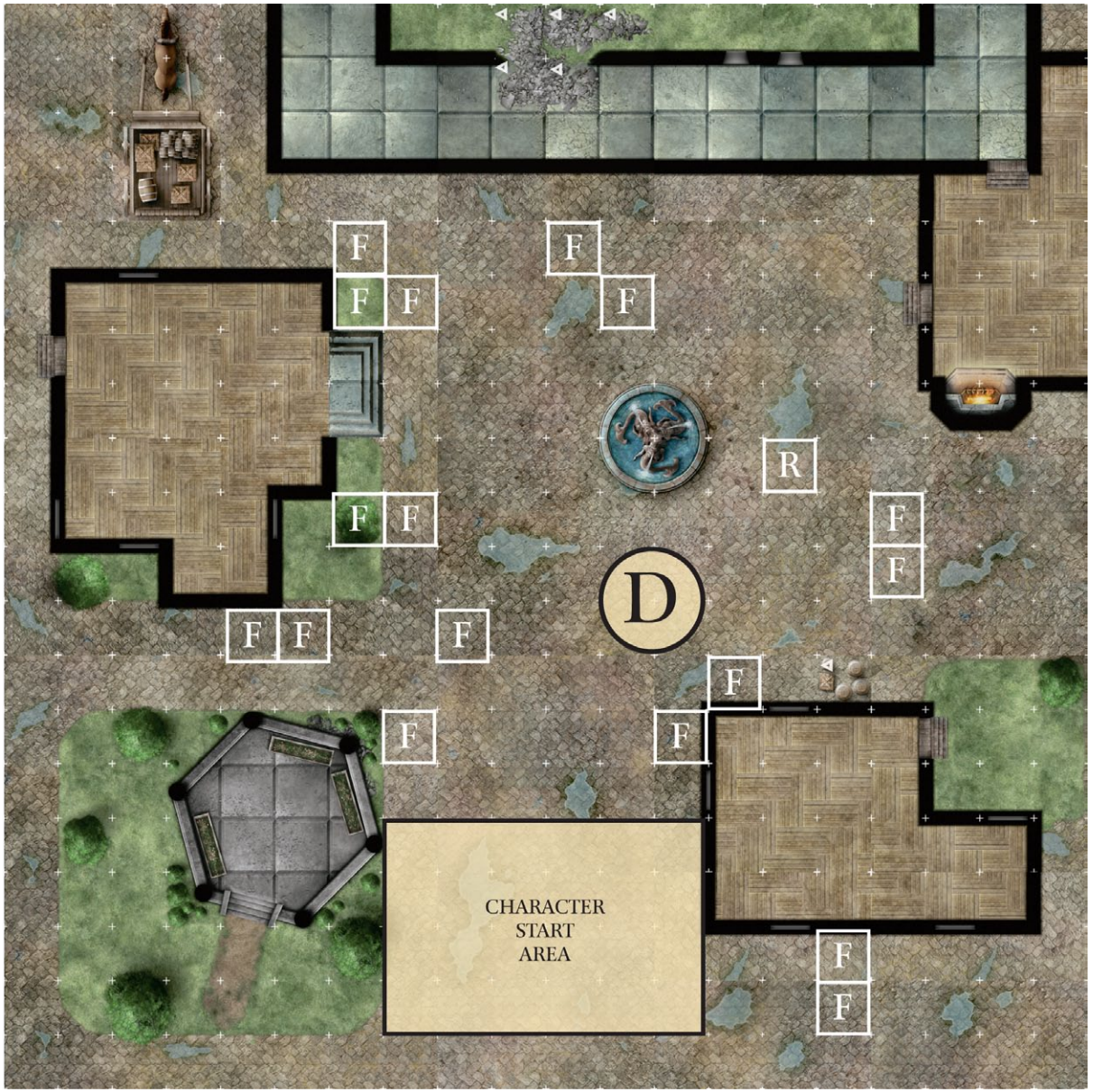
Setup

Young red dragon (D)
Ruin card (R)

Just as the adventurers reach the barracks and promised escape, a young red dragon cuts them off from the refugees. Now they must decide whether to save themselves or sacrifice all to preserve Gardmore's legacy.

If they abandon Gardmore and the refugees, they reach the vaults easily and can make their escape. If they fight, continue with the tactical encounter. Their actions buy time for at least some of the refugees to escape.

If the group confronts the dragon with six party members, give the dragon a +2 bonus to attack rolls and damage rolls.



THE DRAGON

Players who are familiar with *Madness at Gardmore Abbey* might identify this dragon as Mekkalath, the young red who established a lair in the temple to Bahamut in the abbey's vaults. If the dragon survives this encounter, you can decide that it is Mekkalath or possibly that dragon's mother. In the event of the dragon's death, assume that Mekkalath arrives after the events of the siege.

Read:

You lead the straggling refugees through the majestic Heroes' Gate, where the statues of the greatest knights of Gardmore gaze down upon the chaos within the abbey grounds. Heartened by the sudden reversal, the orc horde regroups. The blazing skull has dispersed, but cackling demons and dark undead yet haunt the streets. Of Sir Hrom's Silver Fire or the wizard Vandomar there is no sign.

When you reach the top of Dragon's Roost, you pause to let the refugees catch their breath and regroup. The abbey might be lost, but the dream lives on in its people. So long as they survive, its legacy and the pride of Nerath in the Nentir Vale shall persevere.

But just as you reach the long, low barracks where the vaults lie, from out of the hazy sky streaks a roaring comet of bright flame. For weeks the dragon has watched from on high, and now it has chosen its time to loot the knights' treasures and claim a lair within their once-grand citadel. It lands between you and Gardmore's civilians, cutting off their escape, while within the barracks where you stand, the vaults—and safety—beckon.

Are the ideals of Gardmore and Nerath worth preserving, or are they the false hopes of idealists? You must decide: Preserve justice, defend the innocent, and combat evil in spite of overwhelming odds, or sacrifice the lives of those who depend on you in hopes of returning to fight another day.

Tactics

The dragon fights recklessly at first, using *breath weapon* if it can hit at least three enemies. If it becomes bloodied, it fights more cautiously, avoiding opportunity attacks. Still, the dragon is young and proud, and it remains on the ground to fight.

When the dragon is near death, it attempts to fly away. As it flees, the dragon calls out its name, swearing vengeance upon the adventurers and their descendants (see the sidebar on the previous page).

Young Red Dragon (D) **Level 7 Solo Soldier**
Large natural magical beast (dragon) XP 1,500

HP 332; **Bloodied** 166 **Initiative** +8
AC 23, **Fortitude** 21, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 18 **Perception** +11
Speed 6, fly 8 Darkvision
Resist 15 fire
Saving Throws +5; **Action Points** 2

Traits

Action Recovery
Whenever the dragon ends its turn, any dazing, stunning, or dominating effect on it ends.

Instinctive Assault
On an initiative of 10 + its initiative check, the dragon can use a free action to use *bite* or *claw*. If the dragon cannot use a free action to make this attack due to a dominating or stunning effect, then that effect ends instead of the dragon making the attack.

Standard Actions

Bite (fire) ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +12 vs. AC.
Hit: 2d10 + 6 damage. The target is grabbed and takes ongoing 5 fire damage, or ongoing 10 fire damage if the dragon is bloodied, until the grab ends (escape DC 23).

Claw ✦ **At-Will**
Attack: Melee 2 (one or two creatures); +12 vs. AC. If the dragon targets only one creature, it can make this attack twice against that creature.
Hit: 2d8 + 5 damage, and the dragon grabs the target (escape DC 16) if it has fewer than two creatures grabbed.

Breath Weapon (fire) ✦ **Recharge** ⚄ ⚅
Attack: Close blast 5 (creatures in the blast); +10 vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d12 + 7 fire damage, or 2d12 + 17 fire damage while the dragon is bloodied.
Miss: Half damage.

Triggered Actions

Tail Strike ✦ **At-Will**
Trigger: An enemy leaves a square within 2 squares of the dragon.
Attack (Immediate Reaction): Melee 3 (triggering enemy); +10 vs. Reflex
Hit: 1d6 + 5 damage, and the target falls prone.

Bloodied Breath ✦ **Encounter**
Trigger: The dragon is first bloodied.
Effect (Free Action): Breath weapon recharges, and the dragon uses it.

Skills Bluff +11, Insight +11
Str 22 (+9) **Dex** 17 (+6) **Wis** 16 (+6)
Con 19 (+7) **Int** 11 (+3) **Cha** 14 (+5)
Alignment evil **Languages** Common, Draconic

Features of the Area

Buildings: The roofs of the buildings are 3 squares high, and climbing their walls requires a DC 15 Athletics check. Any creature can enter a building through a doorway. The doors are open.

Cart and Horse: The horse now lies on the ground, dead, partially devoured by roving fire demons. Moving into the cart requires 1 extra square of movement. It provides partial cover.

Fires (F): Burning debris is scattered throughout the area, and some larger fires are effective barricades. Each square of fire is 2 squares tall. Any creature that enters a square of fire or ends its turn in one takes 10 fire damage.

As a move action, a creature adjacent to the fire can extinguish one square of flames.

Fountain: A white marble rendering of Sir Oryn Thain in his younger days stands proudly in the center of this fountain. The fountain is difficult terrain and provides partial cover.

Ruin Card: The ivory-backed Ruin card from the *Deck of Many Things* lies face down on the ground. The dragon does not notice or use the card, but any character can use a minor action to flip it over. The card contains some residual power, which that character can use before the end of his or her next turn. (The essence of the *Deck* communicates its abilities to the wielder.) After that time, it tears itself free from the

character's hand and flies into the air, disappearing from view over the wall.

Touch of Ruin Deck of Many Things Attack

Calling on the power of the Ruin card, you turn a hardy enemy into a decrepit weakling.

Encounter ✦ Teleportation
Standard Action **Close** burst 3
Target: One creature in the burst
Attack: +11 vs. Fortitude
Hit: The target is slowed and weakened (save ends both).
Miss: The target is slowed until the end of your next turn.
Effect: You and the target teleport, swapping places.

Shrubs: These squares are difficult terrain.

Walls: The citadel walls are 4 squares high (1 square higher than the rooftops) and require a DC 23 Athletics check to climb.

Development

If the adventurers fought the dragon and bloody it before retreating or falling, they secure the escape of half the refugees, who flee into the vaults while the dragon is distracted. If they slay the dragon, all the refugees make it into the vaults along with the victorious adventurers.

If the adventurers helped the refugees escape, read:

The refugees flee into the hidden passageway leading to the vaults below Gardmore. For days you navigate treacherous passages constructed by an ancient minotaur civilization, until at last you discover an exit to the surface many leagues away. In a flurry of snow and drifting ashes, you guide the refugees southeast to Fallcrest and safety. Your tale is passed down through the years. Whenever anyone speaks of Gardmore or the old Empire of Nerath, dwellers in the Nentir Vale raise a toast to the heroes of the siege of Gardmore Abbey.

If the adventurers instead save themselves, leaving the civilians of Gardmore behind, no others survive to tell the tale.

If the adventurers fled for their lives, read:

You flee into the safety of the vaults beneath Gardmore, wandering among the ruins of an ancient minotaur civilization until at last you discover a passage to the surface. You are the only survivors of Gardmore's fall, the only ones left to tell of the proud defenders—and how the hubris of the Knight Captain caused the destruction of many. Your story becomes a parable for the age.

Conclusion

With the fall of Gardmore, the orcs of the Stonemarch gain a foothold in the Nentir Vale. As Nerath struggles to maintain its borders, the orcs attack the town of Fallcrest, decimating its population. The golden dream of the empire begins to collapse. Before long, the world is plunged into a new dark age, where civilization flickers like points of light in the monster-infested night. The adventurers' actions determine how the fate of Gardmore Abbey will be remembered, but they are not enough to hold off the long dark to come.

Final Fates

The fates of the surviving Gardmore heroes depend on whether they achieved their character goals. Read or paraphrase the appropriate text depending on their success or failure.

Sir Nordan

You swore to protect the people of Nerath, no matter the cost. You achieve your goal by helping the refugees escape, whether by bloodying or slaying the dragon.

Success: *Your honor restored, you are reunited with your family and accepted back into the ranks of the knights of Nerath. If you survived, you live out your days as a distinguished general in the king's army. Regardless, your legend reaches every realm in the empire.*

Failure: *You have survived, but at what cost? The Nentir Vale will soon sink beneath an overwhelming tide of evil. You return to Nerath forgiven for past transgressions, but there is no peace for you there. Eventually you travel back to the Vale as a knight errant, the rest of your days dedicated to fighting the inexorable darkness.*

Sir Oryn

You crave glorious death in battle. You achieve your goal if you never willingly receive healing in the course of the adventure.

Success: *You fought gloriously, battling for the dream you believe in. Your name is always mentioned among the knights of Gardmore Abbey as the truest of its knights and greatest of its champions.*

Failure: *You survive the fall of Gardmore Abbey as a relic of a bygone age before expiring in a monastery. Only children listen to your tales of the glory and grandeur of better days. Perhaps their children or grandchildren will see Gardmore restored . . .*

Sir Tamlin

You are devoted to your allies. You achieve your goal if none of the starting adventurers has been slain.

Success: *People say the events that transpired at the fall of Gardmore Abbey were echoes of a wager between Bahamut and the Raven Queen on the knights' devotion: When the Raven Queen won, only her devout servant, the Black Knight, survived. Such stories cast you as villain as often as hero, but you let them talk. The heroes whose lives you saved know the truth. That is enough.*

Failure: *Your heart heavy, you made your way toward Nerath to bear news of the abbey to the king. On the way you found a mysterious inn where ravens roosted by the hundreds, and in that place death awaited you. The Raven Queen took your spirit to Letherna, where she judges the*

souls of the Gardmore knights before they pass on. Here, at long last, you meet your father.

Harak

You had to decide whether to stand with the defenders of Gardmore or the orcs. If you sided with the adventurers, you achieve your goal by bloodying or killing Nightbringer, or by slaying six orcs; if you turned against them, you must bloody or kill at least one adventurer.

Success: *You have made your choice, and your soul is finally at peace. If you supported the knights of Nerath and survived, you were inducted into their order afterward. Whether you lived or died, your deeds at Gardmore Abbey are honored among your fellowship.*

If you perished in the service of Nightbringer, your spirit is taken before mighty Gruumsh himself, and the one-eyed god anoints you as a spirit of battle. You inspire the Stonemarch orcs' brutal fury as they sack the town of Fallcrest.

Failure: *Eternally conflicted, you retreat into the wilderness. Sometimes you hunt with orcs and other times humans, but you trust neither. Every year you return to Gardmore Abbey to gaze upon the ruins, seeking a sign to tell you where you belong. Orcs make their home there, but they accept you no more than the knights did. And when you wander away, you wander alone.*

Savvra

You are driven to force the Nerathans to recognize their own destructive pride. You achieve your goal by persuading three Gardmore folk to admit this fact.

Success: *The knights of Gardmore conceded their hubris even as their world fell down around them. Vandomar has vanished, so you had to be your own master as the long darkness fell over Nerath. You came to be regarded as the wisest and mightiest of wizards, and those who once spurned you now seek your counsel.*

Failure: *Even as the abbey fell—just as Bael Turath fell in ancient days—the foolish knights would not see their own folly. With your master slain or missing, you wandered into the wild frontier lands where Blackfang gnolls, Bloodspear orcs, and Daggerburg goblins rewarded you well for your powerful magic. The civilized world is blind to its weaknesses, so you reveal them by tearing down its walls.*

Glynneth

You long to reveal the truth to your son. You achieve your goal if, at the end of the adventure, Tamlin correctly guesses your identity.

If Sir Tamlin is not in the party, you succeed if you survive the adventure without dropping to 0 hit points. (You return to the Vale of Long Night without finding your child.)

Success: *Tamlin knows you for his mother. In the days to come you tell him the story of his brave father, the knight who once won your heart. Together you search for a sign of your brother Zandrian, but you cannot find a trace of him; perhaps he escaped to the Feywild. Eventually you return to your master's domain. Your heart, once solid ice, begins to thaw. You have lost your brother, but you have found your son.*

Failure: *Though he plays at being the Black Knight, your son is weak, lacking the mental and emotional sophistication to make him worthy of his fey inheritance. As soon as the Gardmore ordeal is over, you return to the Vale of Long Night and put your mind to larger matters. After a decade, you have practically forgotten the inconsequential mortal affair. Only the loss of your brother, Zandrian, reminds you of the petty squabbles of the world.*

Rewards

For each adventurer who managed to achieve a personal goal—whether the character lived or died—that character's player receives the *glory of Gardmore* legendary boon as a reward (see below). This boon can be used by each player's character only in the *Madness at Gardmore Abbey* adventure (with his or her DM's permission). Perhaps the character is a descendant of one of the Gardmore heroes, or was inspired by their tale and seeks out the ruins of the abbey.

Alternatively (or additionally), a DM planning to run *Madness at Gardmore Abbey* might decide that the characters begin play with the Ruin card in their possession, a direct link to the events of the siege. Perhaps one of them received the card as a bequest from an ancestor who fought at the abbey.

Glory of Gardmore Level 6 Rare

Tales of Gardmore's siege inspire you to fight on like the valiant knights of old Nerath.

Legendary Boon

Property

- ✦ You gain a +2 item bonus to saving throws against fear effects.
- ✦ At the end of each extended rest you take, choose demon, dragon, orc, or undead. You gain a +2 bonus to damage rolls against the chosen race or creature type until your next extended rest.
  Level 16: +4 bonus to damage rolls.
  Level 26: +6 bonus to damage rolls.

About the Author

Steve Townshend is an award-winning RPG designer whose recent work includes *Monster Vault*™: *Threats to the Nentir Vale*™, *Madness at Gardmore Abbey*™, and *Heroes of the Feywild*™. Prior to his RPG design work, Steve was a professional actor whose primary concentrations were Shakespeare, Meisner technique, and long form improvisation. This past career and training strongly influences his work in role-playing games and short fiction.

Sir Nordan Gram (Human Fighter)

When you razed a border village that refused to pay taxes to Nerath, rival knights of your order, hungry for your lands, demanded you pay for the peasants' spilled blood with your own.

Instead, the king of Nerath exiled you to Gardmore Abbey in the Nentir Vale. For five years you have served out your term in this cold northern frontier, far from your hereditary lands and titles. As your exile comes to a close, you long to return home and discover what has become of your holdings and especially your wife and daughter.

Your time at Gardmore has not been wasted, however. In the years you spent here, you have learned what it means to be part of a fellowship. The knights who dwell here are like your family, especially Sir Oryn Thain and his nephew Sir Tamlin the Black. Instead of managing estates and parading in tournaments, together you have slain wicked giants and repelled dozens of orc and goblin incursions. Here the merit of your deeds surpasses any from your days in the heart of Nerath, where the roads were safe and the people soft and complacent. The knights of your southern homeland posture and preach of valor and honor, but these ideals do not live in their hearts—not as they do at Gardmore Abbey.

Soon, Knight Captain Havarr of Nenlast will honor you and Sir Oryn in a grand retirement ceremony. Then you will turn toward Nerath and home, a far different knight from who you once were.

The Others

As the story begins, you and the following people have been summoned before the Knight Captain.

Sir Oryn Thain (Male Human): The supreme champion of Gardmore in his younger days, this elderly cavalier has taught you what it means to be a knight in earnest. He is the living embodiment of Nerath's highest ideals and has set you a new mark to strive for. But lately your old friend has been gloomy and solemn. As the day of his retirement approaches, Sir Oryn grows ever more withdrawn. If he has a grievance or an objection, though, he is too courteous to give it breath.

Sir Tamlin the Black (Male Half-Elf): Sir Oryn's nephew is the offspring of a former Gardmore knight and a mysterious fey. Tamlin appears to be about your age. Instead of worshiping Bahamut, however, he follows the Raven Queen. That preference and his grim, quiet demeanor have earned him the title of Gardmore's Black Knight. Although several in the abbey fear Sir Tamlin, you know him to be of good heart.

Harak (Male Half-Orc): A foundling, Harak was brought up by Sir Tamlin. Many say he is the Black Knight's cat's-paw, assassin, and henchman. Few trust him, and some suspect him of passing information to the orcs. Harak's presence is the one thing you hold against Tamlin. You believe that if he would rid himself of the foul creature, others would accept Tamlin more readily.

Savvra (Female Tiefling): The mysterious tiefling keeps to the wizard's tower. When she does go out, she continually criticizes the knights and prophesies their downfall. The devilish creature seems determined to cause trouble, and bringing her to a holy citadel can only bring harm. Vandomar must be mad to retain her. And yet, by your oaths you must protect her.

Glynneth (Female Eladrin): From the moment the fey beauty arrived with her brother Zandrian, you have been unable to take your eyes from her. This obsession led to an impulsive rendezvous one night near the Font of Ioun, a shameful act you deeply regret and yet long for again. But the lovely Glynneth acts as though such a thing never happened. Perhaps her heart truly is frozen.

Character Goal

Whether or not Sir Nordan achieves this goal affects the outcome of his story and possible rewards he might receive.

A true knight protects the people of the land he serves. Warriors die in battle to defend those who cannot fight. You must protect such folk so that you can earn your redemption and return home to Nerath with your honor intact.

Success: You achieve your goal if you and your comrades successfully gather the refugees in encounter 4 and slay or bloody the dragon in encounter 5.

Sir Oryn Thain (Human Paladin)

You fought for Gardmore Abbey and the dream of Nerath all your long years. Evil dragons, vile hobgoblins, and sinister yuan-ti have fallen before your blade. But those days are long gone. Now your beard grows white, your limbs weak, your joints arthritic. Knight Captain Havarr of Nenlast has arranged a grand retirement ceremony in the coming weeks to honor you. But as all the knights make ready for the festivities, you think it might as well be a funeral.

They want you to put up your sword. You will receive a patch of earth to tend, raising vegetables until you are buried beneath it. No more clashes with giants or thrilling rescues. Even now, people tell tales of your valor as if they happened to someone else. Storytellers point you out to starry-eyed youths, but at the sight of your old and haggard countenance, the lads bow their heads and turn their faces away.

Your brother Sir Eldyn passed away long ago. Now your only family is your nephew, Sir Tamlin. At least he and Sir Nordan believe in you. In their eyes you remain the champion of Gardmore, slayer of the Winterbole ogre, and hero of the city of Fallcrest. Let them never forget.

The Others

As the story begins, you and the following people have been summoned before the Knight Captain.

Sir Nordan Gram (Male Human): Sir Nordan is the closest person you have to a friend in Gardmore Abbey. Relatively young, he was exiled here by the king five years ago and has just completed his term of service. You saved his life once and taught him the true meaning of knighthood. Despite your bonds of fellowship with the other knights, only Sir Nordan seems to see you for who you are instead of who you were.

Sir Tamlin the Black (Male Half-Elf): Your nephew, Tamlin, is the child of your late brother and a mysterious fey whom he met on a quest in the Feywild. After Sir Eldyn perished in battle, the babe was discovered at the gates of Gardmore with Sir Eldyn's ring on a chain around his waist. As the youth grew up, you told him stories of his father, in whose footsteps Tamlin now strives to walk. His quest for knowledge of his father brought Tamlin to worship the Raven Queen, praying to her in hopes of one day contacting his father's spirit. He is known as the Black Knight of Gardmore for his black armor, pale skin, and grim demeanor.

Harak (Male Half-Orc): The adopted son of your nephew, the half-orc foundling Harak has grown up in Gardmore, though most of the knights disapprove of Sir Tamlin's raising the creature. As a child Harak watched you and the other knights like a cat, as if calculating your every move. He is quiet and withdrawn, spending more and more of his time hunting in the woods near the places where his savage ancestors roam.

Savvra (Female Tiefling): The presence of this creature within the walls of Gardmore Abbey is an affront to the sanctity you fought to protect. It is commonly known that tieflings brought about the downfall of Bael Turath by dealing with devils. Because she is a guest of Gardmore and an apprentice to the wizard Vandomar, no knight would dare harm her, but the sooner she leaves the abbey, the better for everyone.

Glynneth (Female Eladrin): Beautiful and pale, the eladrin might be more dangerous than the most vicious of the dragons you have fought. She seems to be without compassion or warmth, but to look upon her is to love her. In his lifetime you never forgave your brother for leaving the knighthood so he could wed the fey lady he had rescued, but seeing Glynneth's chill beauty helps you understand your brother's struggle.

Character Goal

Whether or not Sir Oryn achieves this goal affects the outcome of his story and possible rewards he might receive.

You wish to die a hero, in battle fighting for the glory of Bahamut. Such a death would be meaningless, however, unless you can preserve the lives of your companions.

Success: You achieve your goal if you end the adventure having willingly received no healing (although you can be healed while you are unconscious).

Sir Tamlin the Black (Half-Elf Cleric)

Your father, Sir Eldyn, was a noble knight of Gardmore who ventured into the Feywild on a quest. There he rescued an enchanting lady of the fey from the clutches of a giant. Their romance did not last long, though, for he perished fighting evil in a land far away. Soon after, you were discovered at the gates of Gardmore Abbey, a half-elf babe clutching Sir Eldyn's ring.

Your Uncle Oryn, a Gardmore knight, brought you up within these walls, instructing you in the way of Bahamut to become a knight like your father. Many of the other knights see Sir Eldyn as a failure who abandoned his calling for a fickle fey. But Oryn's tales tell of a noble champion who sacrificed all he loved to go where he was most needed.

You have been fascinated with your father's legend since your uncle first told of him—so fascinated that when you reached adolescence, you turned your worship to the Raven Queen. In this, you hoped she might call his spirit forth so that you could meet him for the first time. All your life you have tried to equal your father's heroism. Now, aided by the goddess of fate and death, you work to match his deeds and thus honor his memory.

Lately, you have been plagued by strange dreams. In your visions the Raven Queen and Bahamut sit at a table, wagering over a game of cards. You cannot decipher their meanings, but the dreams fill you with a dire foreboding.

The Others

As the story begins, you and the following people have been summoned before the Knight Captain.

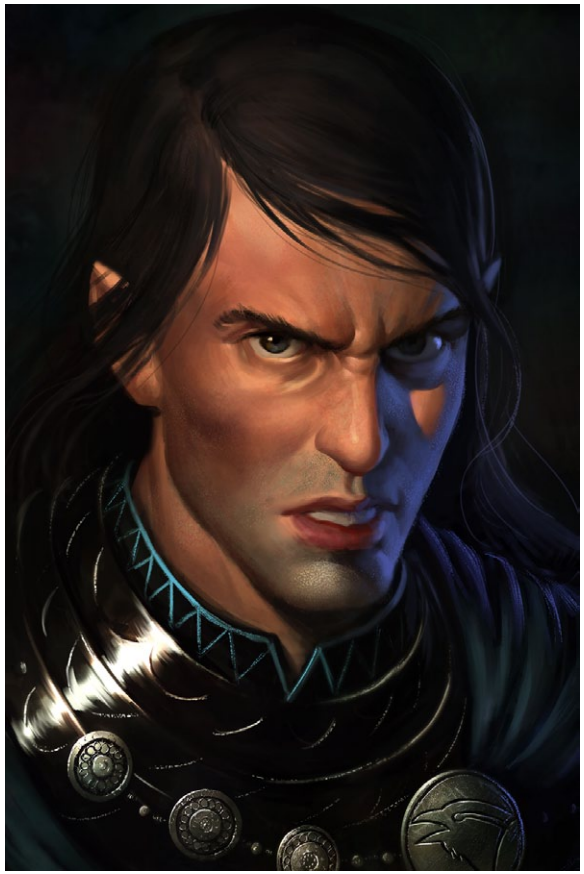
Sir Nordan Gram (Male Human): Sir Nordan is a close friend to you and your uncle, and the three of you have fought many battles together over the past five years. Sir Nordan, who was exiled from Nerath to serve at Gardmore, has learned from your uncle what it means to be a true knight.

Sir Oryn Thain (Male Human): Your elderly uncle might not understand you, but you know he wants only the best for you. Once Gardmore's greatest champion, Sir Oryn is now much diminished. The first time you saw him fight, you imagined he was your father's ghost—valiant, courageous, and strong. But lately your uncle has been acting strangely. The prospect of imminent retirement seemingly does not sit well with him.

Harak (Male Half-Orc): Once your adopted son needed your protection, but now he is your equal. You have brought him up as your uncle raised you, devout in the service of the Gardmore knights. The other knights, however, did not accept Harak into their order. As he nears adulthood, Harak has been spending more time in the woods. You suspect he has encountered his other family there, though he never speaks of it.

Savvra (Female Tiefling): You are more tolerant of the tiefling Savvra than are the other knights, for you see the same prejudices directed at both her and Harak. The two seem to have established a rapport, and you believe it's good for Harak to have someone else to talk to. Secretly you hope Savvra helps him to identify with the abbey rather than the wild lands he has roamed since he was rejected as a candidate for knighthood.

Glynneth (Female Eladrin): Though beautiful, the fey lady is cold as Letherna, the frozen realm where your goddess dwells. She treats the knights of Gardmore with contempt, and she can be domineering and pitiless. You have a bad feeling that her motives for being at Gardmore Abbey are not all she says they are.



Character Goal

Whether or not Sir Tamlin achieves this goal affects the outcome of his story and possible rewards he might receive.

As an envoy of the Raven Queen, you must call upon her favor to save your companions from death, just as your father would have protected them.

Success: You achieve your goal if, at the end of the adventure, none of the starting characters has been slain.

Harak (Half-Orc Ranger)

You were born on a battlefield, abandoned by parents you will never know. As you have heard it told, the Gardmore knights thought to give you a quick and merciful death, but the half-elf Sir Tamlin intervened. He raised you as his own child, for he too had been abandoned by his kin.

In his house, you learned the tenets of knighthood from Sir Tamlin and his uncle, Sir Oryn. Stronger and faster than the other youths, you became a champion on the training field, but when you presented yourself for knighthood, you were passed by. Your orc heritage stained you in the eyes of the Gardmore knights, who instead put you to work as a scout in the wilds beyond Gardmore.

You cannot bear to watch the training field any longer, for the sight awakens a savage anger in you that long lay dormant. Instead, you spend your time hunting in the forests and fields beyond Gardmore, taking solace in the natural world. During your expeditions, you have encountered savage orcs and other half-orcs who travel among them. In the tales of the knights, they always seemed like monsters and villains, but now you can see their valiant strength; though thousands die hurling themselves against the might of Nerath, still they persist. Savage they might be, but they have outlasted every empire of humankind and shall, you suspect, outlast Nerath as well.

The Others

As the story begins, you and the following people have been summoned before the Knight Captain.

Sir Nordan Gram (Male Human): When the knight of Nerath called Sir Nordan arrived in Gardmore, he was proud, stubborn, and haughty. In the time he has spent here, thanks to Sir Oryn, he has changed; now he is fair, honorable, and just. In many ways he has become the knight you would like to be.

Sir Oryn Thain (Male Human): Sir Tamlin's elderly uncle has never given you his full attention or respect. In his view, all orcs are dangerous, even those who are half human. Nevertheless, long ago he was the greatest champion of Gardmore, and he has trained you well in the art of battle. You admire and envy Sir Oryn for his unswerving devotion to principle.

Sir Tamlin the Black (Male Half-Elf): Your adoptive father has always treated you fairly. As abandoned half-breed children among the knights of the abbey, you have much in common. A half-elf, he appears not much older than you, though his quiet wisdom belies his youthful looks. You are close companions in friendship and in battle. In spite of your inner conflict, you do not wish to disappoint him.

Savvra (Female Tiefling): Aside from Sir Tamlin, Savvra is the closest thing to a kindred spirit you have in all of Gardmore. The tiefling endures the same prejudices that you face. At first she seemed frightening, but after spending time with her, you realized that she uses this facade to ward off unwelcome scrutiny from the knights, much as Sir Tamlin embraces his identity as the dread Black Knight.

Glynneth (Female Eladrin): The ice-cold eladrin beauty has little to say to you. If you didn't know better, you would suspect she did not even notice your existence. You sense that Glynneth is hiding her true motives, and you wonder if she poses a threat.

Character Goal

Whether or not Harak achieves this goal affects the outcome of his story and possible rewards he might receive.

A choice looms in your future. You will know the moment when it arrives, and when it does you must make a choice—orc or knight—and commit to it. Will you surrender to your savage orc nature, or live by the tenets of knighthood despite being denied that title and that right?

Success: If you side with the party in encounter 3, you achieve your goal by slaying six orcs (an orc mob counts as four orcs for this purpose if you deal the killing blow). Bloodying or dealing the killing blow to Nightbringer also fulfills this goal. If you turn against the knights, you achieve your goal by bloodying or killing one of the starting characters.

Savvra (Tiefling Wizard)

You can trace your family back to the fall of Bael Turath. Your proud noble line, driven by an insatiable lust for power, made pacts with devils—bargains that brought the empire crashing into ruin and forever branded your race with infernal markings.

You came to Gardmore Abbey to study arcane magic far from the shameful decadence of Nerath. But even here in the Nentir Vale, the reek of human pride pervades the air. The knights look upon your horns and tail as if you were sent to drag them to the Nine Hells. But in truth, you don't need to. They will do it to themselves.

When you look upon Nerath, you see the same decadence, corruption, and pride that laid low Bael Turath. You only hope that when the end comes this time, you will not be around to witness it. The world will spiral into chaos, and as it did last time, a ruinous dark age of ignorance and barbarism will fill the void. In the meantime, here at Gardmore Abbey you study your craft quietly and endure your arrogant master, Vandomar, his naïve betrothed, Elaida, and the foolish knights who cannot see the warning signs of an age in decline.

If you could, you would show these pious knights the price of power, but they are blind, and their prejudice against your kind makes them deaf to your warnings.

The Others

As the story begins, you and the following people have been summoned before the Knight Captain.

Sir Nordan Gram (Male Human): You can't help but hold a grudging respect for this knight of Nerath, even though he shuns you. He came to the abbey five years ago carrying all the haughtiness of Nerath, but in his exile he has learned a modicum of humility.

Sir Oryn Thain (Male Human): The elderly champion of Gardmore has ever opposed your presence in the abbey. He comes from a crusading tradition that considers most nonhumans to be outsiders and enemies. You cannot help smirking at the irony of the family he has inherited—a half-elf son who adopted a half-orc foundling.

Sir Tamlin the Black (Male Half-Elf): The Black Knight of Gardmore is something of a mystery to you. He is carefully neutral about your presence in the abbey but seems to encourage his adopted half-orc son, Harak, to spend time with you. A devotee of the Raven Queen, Sir Tamlin appears to live by his own code; the other knights, marveling at his boldness, have little choice but to accommodate him.

Harak (Male Half-Orc): The half-orc came to you for friendship in earnest, and you accepted his offer. Torn between two worlds, Harak longs for acceptance among knights who will never grant him what he seeks. Meanwhile, he explores the wilds where his savage kin make their homes. He asks you for counsel and advice, and you do your best to tell him the truth—no matter how hard it is to hear.

Glynneth (Female Eladrin): The frosty eladrin might be the most powerful presence in the abbey. Nearly immortal, she cares nothing for what the knights think of her, yet all the while they stumble over themselves to please her. You share a bond with Glynneth that the others cannot comprehend. As outsiders, you have similar views about the abbey and the vanity of its knights, and you share a talent for bending arcane power to your command.

Character Goal

Whether or not Savvra achieves this goal affects the outcome of her story and possible rewards she might receive.

You need the denizens of Gardmore to see the vanity and pride that consumes them.

Success: You achieve your goal by persuading three Gardmore NPCs to concede the knights' pride

or folly. Doing this with one individual requires a successful check using History, Diplomacy, or Intimidate. You fail if you incur 3 failures before you have convinced three people. The following list gives the encounters when certain Gardmore NPCs can be interacted with. (The DM knows how hard they are to convince.)

Encounter 1: Havarr of Nenlast

Encounter 2: Sir Elaida, Sir Hrom, Zandrian Velfarren

Encounter 3: Zandrian Velfarren

Encounter 3 Aftermath: Sir Hrom, Vandomar

Glynneth (Eladrin Warlock)

Mortals.

If your brother Zandrian had not summoned you to help him establish a treaty between Mithrendain and the Nentir Vale, you never would have set foot upon this dull, dirty world and concerned yourself with its frivolous problems. Why even bother with its fleeting empires, petty rulers, and flawed champions? But you owe Zandrian a favor, so here you are—in the midst of "holy" knights who follow your every move with both suspicion and desire.

Once, their longing gazes might have flattered you, before you made your pact with the Prince of Frost. Long ago, you were captured by a cruel fomorian king and imprisoned in the Feydark. A valiant knight of this very abbey came to your rescue, slew the giant, and won your heart, just like in the bards' tales. You were happy for a time. But like everything tainted by the mortal world, your bliss was not to last.

Your knight perished on a quest to defend the eladrin city of Shinaelestra against a horde of trolls. You had begged him not to go, but he would not give up his calling for love—not even yours. Your heart burst to pieces, and you lost all will to live. But then the archfey known as the Prince of Frost came to you and offered to freeze the pieces of your heart back together if you agreed to forsake all love and serve him. Mortally wounded by grief, you accepted.

Your pact with the prince has made you strong. But beware: At Gardmore Abbey, old attachments threaten to melt the sheath of ice and unveil a secret that could spell your undoing.

The Others

As the story begins, you and the following people have been summoned before the Knight Captain.

Sir Nordan Gram (Male Human): This exiled knight strives for redemption so he can return to his wife and daughter in the empire of Nerath. To test his devotion, you seduced him at the Font of Ioun, proving that even the most righteous of mortals falls easily to weakness. He means nothing to you.

Sir Oryn Thain (Male Human): The brother of your long-lost love, the elderly Sir Oryn does not suspect you to be the lady who took Sir Eldyn from the knighthood. The old fool clings to outmoded notions of valor and honor. Yet the knighthood means to retire him, taking away the single purpose that defines him.

Sir Tamlin the Black (Male Half-Elf): The Gardmore knights call him the Black Knight for his devotion to the Raven Queen. Little does he know that he is your son. Your servants delivered him here to be brought up in the ways of his father. Frozen though your heart might be, you cannot help but hope that this child grows into someone you can respect.

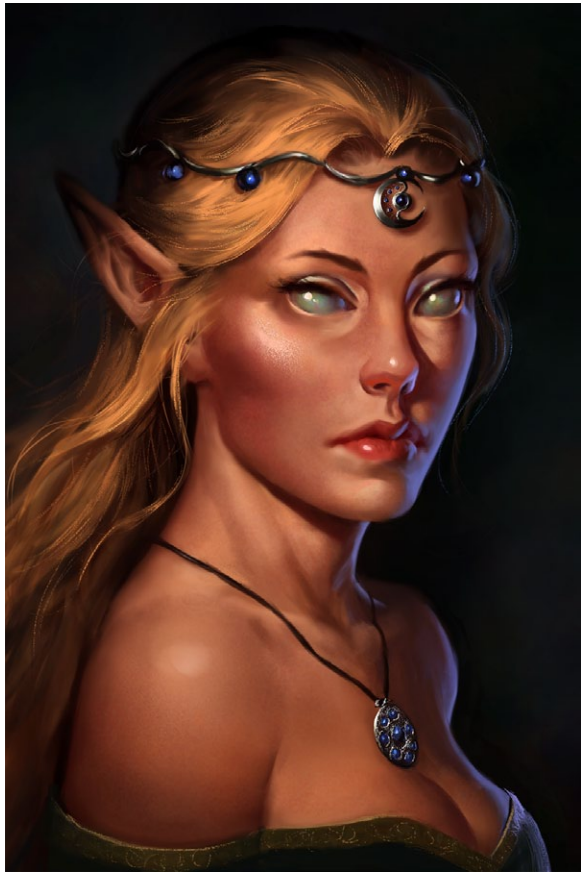
Harak (Male Half-Orc): Sir Tamlin brought up this pitiable creature and, for reasons you cannot fathom, trained it to think and act like a knight. The other knights barely tolerate the half-breed in their midst. If there is any significant difference between humans and orcs, it is that the latter are honest in their savagery.

Savvra (Female Tiefling): For a mortal, Savvra is remarkably insightful and canny. Despite her ability, the tiefling faces the same prejudices experienced by the half-orc. You have found her to be a suitable companion. She talks sense and is not afraid to point out the chinks in the Gardmore knights' armor of virtue.

Character Goal

Whether or not Glynneth achieves this goal affects the outcome of her story and possible rewards she might receive.

You must let your son Tamlin know your true identity, even though the Prince of Frost's pact forbids you to tell him. However, you have found a loophole in the pact (see below). In addition, whenever Tamlin is damaged by an enemy, you take 5 psychic damage.



Success: Whenever you slay a creature that has attacked Tamlin, you earn one word. At the end of the adventure, you can try to tell or hint the truth to Tamlin, using no more words than you have earned. You achieve your goal if Tamlin correctly guesses your identity.

If you try to tell him before the adventure's end, whether or not you have earned any words, you automatically fail.

If Sir Tamlin is not in the party: You achieve your goal if you end the adventure without dropping to 0 hit points; you could not bear it if the Prince of Frost learned you were bested in some paltry mortal affair.

COMING NEXT MONTH

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